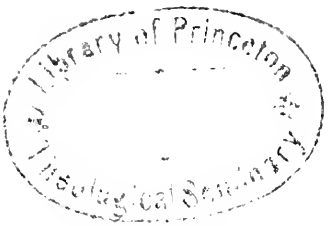

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A COMMENTARY

ON

THE PSALMS OF DAVID

BY

JOHN CALVIN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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JOHN CALVIN,

TO THE GODLY AND CANDID READERS,

HEALTH, ETC.

If the benefit accruing to the church of God from reading my Commentaries, be as great as the advantage I have derived from writing them, I shall have no reason to regret having undertaken the task. Although I had expounded the Book of Psalms in this small school of mine three years ago, when I had concluded this labour, I resolved not to publish more extensively what I had deposited with those of my own household in a spirit of familiarity. Also before I commenced my exposition at the request of my brethren, I said in all sincerity that I regarded it as superfluous, because that most faithful teacher of the church, Martin Bucer, by the consummate erudition, diligence, and fidelity he had displayed in this walk, had at least wrought this effect, that there was the less necessity for my work. Nor if the Commentaries of Wolphgang Musculus had at that time been before the public, could I in justice have passed them over in silence, since he too has earned no small praise in the judgment of good men by his carefulness and pains. I had not yet arrived at the conclusion of the work, when lo I am assailed with fresh importunities, not to suffer my meditations, which had been taken down faithfully and dexterously, and not without great labour, to be lost to the world. I still persisted in my purpose: only promising, and this I had long since purposed, to write something in French, that our own nation might be assisted in the study of so useful a book. While thinking about making this attempt, suddenly, and beside my purpose, by some mysterious impulse or other, I made the experiment of a Latin exposition in one Psalm. And now, as my success, while it corresponded with my wishes, far sur-

passed my hopes, I grew bolder: accordingly, I began to attempt the same in some few Psalms. On perceiving this, my intimate friends, as though they held me bound to them, urged me with increased confidence not to break down in my course. I had one motive for obeying them, which in the beginning had induced me to make the first experiment; and that was, lest at any time what had been taken down from my discourses, should be brought out without my approbation or privity. Certainly I was dragged reluctantly by this fear, rather than led by my own free will to weave this web. Meanwhile, however, as the work proceeded, I began to perceive more distinctly how far from superfluous this lucubration would be; and also from my own individual case I found experimentally, that to readers not so exercised I should be a useful assistant in understanding the Psalms. What various and resplendent riches are contained in this treasury, it were difficult to find words to describe. For my own part, I know that whatever I shall say, will fall far short of their desert. But because it is better to give the readers some taste, though but slight, of the great advantage to be derived from it, than to pass it over in utter silence, I may be permitted briefly to advert to a matter whose magnitude does not admit of being completely unfolded. I am in the habit of calling this book, not inappropriately, 'The Anatomy of all the parts of the soul,' for not an affection will any one find in himself, an image of which is not reflected in this mirror. Nay, all the griefs, sorrows, fears, misgivings, hopes, cares, anxieties, in short, all the disquieting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated, the Holy Spirit hath here pictured to the life. The other scriptures contain the commands which God enjoined his servants to bear to us. But here prophets themselves conversing with God, because they lay bare all their inmost thoughts, invite or hale every one of us to examine himself in particular, lest aught of the many infirmities to which we are liable, or of the many vices with which we are beset should remain undetected. A rare and surpassing benefit, when, every lurking-place having been explored, the heart is brought into the light cleansed from hypocrisy, that most

noisome pest. In a word, if calling upon God be the greatest protection to our safety, since a better or more unerring rule can be obtained nowhere than in this book, according as each man shall have profited most in understanding it, so will he have attained to a good part of the heavenly doctrine. Earnest prayer springs, first, from a sense of our need, and next, from faith in the promises of God. Here the readers will be most effectually awakened to a sense of their maladies, and instructed in seeking the remedies for them. And moreover, whatever may contribute to animate us, when God is to be prayed to, is pointed out in this book. Nor indeed are the promises alone presented to us; but there is placed before us one who is arming himself to prayer; standing in the midst, between the invitation of God, on the one hand, and the impediments of the flesh on the other; so that if at any time manifold misgivings disquiet us, we may learn to wrestle with them till the soul mount up to God free and unencumbered. And not only so, but though beset by doubts, apprehensions, and alarms, that we may, nevertheless, press forward to praying, till we are satisfied with the consolation it affords. For thus ought we to resolve: that though distrust may close the gate of access to our prayers, yet must we not give way, whensoever our minds waver or are agitated with inquietude, but must persevere, till faith emerge victorious from her encounters. And in many passages we may observe the servants of God fluctuating in such a manner while praying, that almost overpowered by the alternations of success and failure, they obtain the palm only by arduous efforts. There, on the one hand, the weakness of the flesh betrays itself, while, on the other, the power of faith exerts itself; if not so active as were to be wished for; yet at least prepared to strive until by degrees it acquires full energy. However, as those points which bear upon the method of praying aright will be found spread through the whole work, I will not burden the readers with superfluous repetition, neither will I delay their progress. This only it will be worth while to point out cursorily, that by this book we are taught, (and there is nothing more to be desired,) not only how familiar access to God may be opened

to us, but how we may lawfully and freely lay bare before him the infirmities which a sense of shame prevents our confessing to men. Nay further, here also is prescribed in the most exact manner how we may offer acceptably the sacrifice of praises, which God declareth to be most precious in his sight, and of most sweet savour. Nowhere are there read more luminous commendations both of God's unexampled beneficence towards his church, and of all his works; nowhere are recorded so many deliverances, nowhere are the instances of his fatherly providence and concern for us set forth more gloriously; lastly, nowhere is the method of praising God delivered more fully, or are we stimulated more powerfully to render to him this office of godliness. Moreover, although the book is replete with all the precepts which avail to the framing of our life to holiness, piety, and righteousness; still above all things will it instruct us to the patient endurance of the cross; and this is the infallible proof of obedience; namely, when renouncing the guidance of our own affections, we submit ourselves to God, and are content that our life should be so governed according to his will, that our bitterest griefs become sweet, because they are from him. Lastly, not only are there recited here general encomiums of God's goodness which may teach us that we should rest contented on him alone, in order that godly minds may wait for certain help from him in every necessity; but the free remission of sins, which alone both makes God favourable to us, and procures us perfect peace with him, is so set forth, that nothing is wanting to complete the knowledge of eternal salvation. Now if the pains bestowed by me upon these Commentaries shall profit my readers, let them be assured that by the ordinary experience of conflicts with which the Lord hath exercised me, I have been in no ordinary degree assisted, not only in adapting to my immediate use whatever of doctrine I was permitted to draw from hence, but also in that it opened to me a more familiar way towards comprehending the drift of each of the writers of the Psalms. And as David holds the chief place among them, it was no small help to me in obtaining a fuller understanding of the complaints he makes of the intestine sorrows

of the church, that I had suffered the same things which he deplores, or similar to them, from enemies of the church who were of her own household. For although I am very far indeed removed from him, nay, though aspiring slowly and laboriously to attain to the many virtues in which he excelled, I am still encumbered with their opposite vices, yet if I possess any quality in common with him, I hesitate not to make the comparison. Therefore, although while perusing the instances of his faith, patience, fervour, zeal, and uprightness, the unlikeness drew from me, as it ought to do, unnumbered sighs, still it has been of vast advantage to me to behold in him, as it were in a glass, as well the commencements of my own calling, as the entire course of my endeavours to make it good; so that I knew the more assuredly that whatsoever that most illustrious prince and prophet endured, was held out to me for an ensample. How far inferior my lot is to his, it is unnecessary to observe. But, as he was exalted from the sheepfolds to the supreme dignity of empire, so, taking me out of my originally obscure and humble estate, God hath thought me worthy of the honourable office of a herald and minister of the Gospel. When I was as yet a very little boy, my father destined me for the study of theology. But when he perceived that legal knowledge universally raised its cultivators to wealth and influence, the prospect it held out induced him abruptly to change his purpose. Thus it came to pass, that called back from the study of philosophy, I was reluctantly led to acquaint myself with laws; and although I endeavoured to apply myself honestly to this pursuit, yet God by the mysterious rein of his providence, at length guided me back and gave another direction to my course. And first, since I was devoted to the superstitions of popery too pertinaciously to admit of my being easily extricated from such an abyss of mire, my mind, which had become more callous than might be expected from one of my years, he subdued to teachableness by a sudden conversion. And thus, imbued with some taste of true godliness, I was fired with so vehement a desire to improve in it, that although I did not cast off all other studies, yet I pursued them with less warmth.

A year had not elapsed when all who were desirous of purer doctrine, were continually coming to learn of me while as yet but a novice and tyro. I, who was naturally somewhat simple, and was always fond of the shade and retirement, then sought where to hide myself; but this was so far from being permitted me, that all my retreats were like a public lecture room. In a word, whereas the one great object with me was to live retired and undistinguished, God so led me about through various turnings, that he yet suffered me not to rest anywhere, until in spite of the bent of my nature, I was dragged forth into the light. And it was for the purpose of enjoying the repose so long denied me in the seclusion of some obscure nook, that I left my fatherland and retired into Germany. But lo! while I lay hid and unknown at Basle, it happened, since, in consequence of many pious persons having been burnt in Gaul, a flame of indignation was kindled in Germany by those fires, that wicked and lying pamphlets were circulated for the purpose of putting it out, which stated that none were so cruelly dealt with but Anabaptists and turbulent characters, who, by their untoward ravings, were undermining not only religion, but all civil order. Perceiving that the object of these crafty instruments of the court was not only that the shameful effusion of innocent blood might be buried under an unfounded slander upon the holy martyrs, but that thereafter they might be allowed to wade through indiscriminate slaughter without exciting compassion in any one for their victims, I resolved that unless I opposed myself to them to the utmost of my power, my silence could not be exculpated from the charge of perfidy.

This was the motive for publishing my "Institute"; first, that I might vindicate from undeserved contumely those my brethren, whose death was precious in the sight of the Lord; and then, since the same severities menaced many other unhappy men, that at least some sympathy and concern for them might be excited in foreign nations. For it was not this dense and laborious work which is now extant, but only a brief manual that was published at that time; and for no other purpose than to bear witness to the faith of those

whom I saw basely maligned by impious and faithless flatterers. Moreover, whether my object was slyly to acquire fame appeared from my speedy departure, especially as no one there knew that I was the author. That I was the author I always concealed elsewhere also, and resolved to persist in the course I had begun, when at length I was detained at Geneva, not so much by the counsel or exhortation, as by the terrible imprecations of William Farel, if I refused, as though God out of heaven had laid his mighty hand upon me. As the wars had prevented my proceeding direct to Strasburg, I had resolved to pass rapidly along this route, so as not to remain more than one night in the city. A little before, popery had been put to the rout by the exertions of this excellent man and Peter Viret; but matters were still in an unsettled state, and the city was divided into unholy and noxious factions. One man, who, basely abandoning our cause, now went back again to the papists, at once brought me into notice. Upon this, Farel, so amazing was the zeal for promoting the Gospel with which he burned, immediately strained every nerve to detain me. And as he understood that I was secretly devoted to studies of a private nature, when he saw that he made no progress by entreaty, he fell to violent imprecation, that God might curse my retirement if I shrunk from rendering assistance in so great a necessity. Thus subdued by terror, I abandoned the journey I had undertaken, so, however, that, conscious as I was of the bashfulness and timidity of my nature, I would not bind myself to discharge any definite office. Scarce four months had elapsed when we were assailed on one side by anabaptists, on the other by a certain iniquitous apostate, who, relying upon the secret support of some of the great ones, was enabled to give us a great deal of trouble. And during all this time dissensions within the church, and those one upon another, disturbed us strangely. I, who confess that I am naturally of a timid, yielding, and lowly mind, was compelled to encounter such fierce tempests, as part of my early training; and though I did not sink under them, yet was I not sustained by such greatness of mind that I did not rejoice more than became me in being ejected by violence.

And again, disengaged and free from the obligation of this calling, I resolved to remain quiet in a private station, when that most distinguished minister of Christ, Martin Bucer, haled me back to a new post by a mode of forcible entreaty similar to that which Farel had employed. Accordingly, being alarmed by the example of Jonas, which he held up to me, I proceeded in the office of teaching. And though I always continued like myself, studiously avoiding celebrity, I was even borne I know not how, to the imperial assemblies, where, whether I would or not, I was compelled to appear before the eyes of many. Afterwards, when the Lord having compassion on this city had allayed those calamitous troubles, and by his wonderful power had scattered as well their wicked counsels as their sanguinary attempts, a necessity was imposed upon me of seeking again my former station contrary to my earnest wishes. For although the welfare of this church was a matter of such deep concern, that I could not refuse to die for its sake, yet my timidity suggested to me many plausible excuses, why I should not willingly subject my shoulders to so arduous a burden afresh. At length, the solemn obligation of duty and my honour carried it that I should restore myself to the flock from which I had been torn; yet with what grief, what tears, and what heaviness, the Lord is my best witness, and many godly men who would have wished me delivered from this painful state, had they not been sore pressed by the same fear which weighed me down. It will be a long story if I should attempt to relate with what a variety of encounters God hath exercised me, and with what a diversity of trials he hath proved me from that time. But that I may not occasion any disgust to my readers by a waste of words, I now repeat briefly what I observed before, that since David shewed me the way by his own footsteps, I experienced no small comfort therefrom. For as the Philistines and other foreign enemies harassed that holy king with incessant wars, but the malice and wickedness of perfidious men nearer home, wounded him still deeper; so I, assailed on all sides, have enjoyed scarce one moment undisturbed by foreign or intestine conflicts. Since Satan had oftentimes employed

many means to pull down the fabric of this church, it came to this at last, that I who am inapt for war, and timorous, was compelled to crush his deadly assaults by opposing my person to him. For five whole years had I to fight without intermission to preserve order, since froward men were furnished with overgrown influence, and some too of the common people, seduced by the allurements they held out to them, sought to obtain the power of doing what they pleased without control. For to men devoid of religion, and despisers of the heavenly doctrine, the ruin of the church was a light matter, provided that, getting possession of the power they sought, they might dare whatever passion prompted. Many, too, poverty and hunger, some, insatiable ambition, or a vile lust of gain, impelled to frantic designs, that by throwing everything into confusion, they would rather involve themselves and us in one common ruin, than continue in a state of subordination. During this so long a period of time, scarcely a weapon that is forged in the workshop of Satan was not employed by them. Nor, to such a pass had they come, was there any other way of putting a stop to their wicked machinations, than cutting them off by an ignominious death; which was indeed a mournful spectacle to me; for though they deserved any punishment, yet I would rather they had lived in prosperity, safe and untouched, as would have been the case, had they not obstinately refused to listen to wholesome counsels. Although this five years' trial was severe and painful to me, not less severely was I racked by the malignity of those who ceased not to assail myself and my ministry with virulent slanders. For though a good part of them are so blinded by a passion for calumny, that they at once betray their shamelessness to their own infamy, while others are not so concealed by their cunning but that they too lie prostrate, convicted and disgraced; yet when a man has been a hundred times purged of a charge, to be attacked again without any cause, is an indignity sore to be endured. Because I maintain that the world is governed by the secret providence of God, presumptuous men rise up against me, and allege that by this means God is made the author of evil: a trumpery calumny,

and which, did it not meet with hearers who have an appetite for such food, would of itself quickly come to nought; but there are many, whose minds are so eaten up with envy and spleen, or ingratitude, or dishonesty, that they shrink from no falsehood, however preposterous, and even portentous. Others endeavour to overthrow God's eternal predestination, which distinguishes the reprobate from the elect; others undertake to defend freewill, and presently multitudes are carried away to join them, not so much from ignorance, as a perversity of zeal, which I know not how to characterize. And if they were professed enemies that brought these troubles upon us it were to be borne. But those who shroud themselves under the name of brother, and not only feed on Christ's sacred bread, but also administer the same to others, those, in short, who boast aloud that they are heralds of the Gospel; for them to wage such nefarious wars, how detestable is it? Here, indeed, I may complain most justly with David: *The man of my peace, and who ate bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me,* Ps. xli. 10. also Ps. lv. 14. *He who was of one mind with me, and my partner who went with me to the temple of God, with whom I took sweet counsel, hath assailed me with reproaches as an enemy.* Others spread ridiculous rumours about my treasures, others about my enormous influence; by others my dainty fare is bandied about. And shall he who is content with scanty food and the garb of a plebeian, nor requires from the very humblest, more of frugality than is seen in himself, shall he be held as over luxurious? As for the influence they envy, all I wish is, that they had it instead of me, for they estimate my power by the weight of cares with which I am overwhelmed. That I am not a monied man, if I cannot persuade some folks while I am alive, my death at length will prove. I confess, indeed, I am by no means poor, because I crave no more than is necessary to support me. Although there is no colourable ground for these figments, yet they are received with applause by many, because the majority rely upon this as the only means of cloaking their enormities, namely, if black and white are confounded, and believe that the best and shortest way of obtaining

impunity and full license is, to destroy the authority of Christ's servants. To them are added, the hypocritical mockers in feasts, of whom David complains, Ps. xxxv. 16, and not only lick-trenchers, but all those who hunt after favour with the powerful by false informations. Long accustomed to gulp down such wrongs as these, although I had almost grown callous, yet it must needs be when insolence increases, that I should sometimes be pierced with bitter pangs. Nor was it enough that I should be so inhumanly treated by my neighbours, but also I know not what distemperature stirred up against me a band of lewd fellows from the frozen ocean. Hitherto, I am speaking of the intestine enemies of the church, who, boasting mightily of the Gospel of Christ, assail me with more than hostile violence because I do not hold to their gross fiction as to the carnal manducation of Christ, of whom I may be allowed to testify even with David, *while I seek peace, they make haste to war*, Ps. cxx. 7. Moreover, the monstrous ingratitude of them all is apparent herein, that they attack in flank and rear a man whom they ought to support in his strenuous efforts to maintain a cause as much their own as his. Doubtless, if they were possessed of even a faint sense of humanity, the fury of the papists which is directed against me with such unbridled violence, would assuage the most implacable animosity towards me. But since this was the lot of David, that though he had deserved well of his own people, nevertheless he was bitterly hated of many, without a cause; even as he complains, Ps. lxix. 5, *that he had paid them that which he had not taken*, it was no light comfort to me, while I was assailed by the gratuitous malice of those who ought to have assisted me by kind offices, to frame myself after such and so glorious a pattern. And also this experimental knowledge was no small help to me in understanding the Psalms, the effect of which was, that I did not wander as it were in an unknown region. The readers too will find, if I mistake not, that when I unfold the inmost feelings of David and others, I discourse on them no otherwise than as on things familiarly known to me. Moreover, since I have laboured to communicate the use of this treasure to all

the godly, even though I have not obtained what I purposed, yet the attempt merits somewhat of favour. Still I ask no more, than that each should pass an impartial and candid judgment upon my labours, with reference to the advantage and fruit he shall reap from them. This is certain, as I have before said, that the bare perusal of the work will shew clearly that I have by no means sought to please, except in so far as I might benefit others. Accordingly, I have not only preserved throughout a plain and simple method of teaching, but that all ostentation might be the further removed, I have for the most part abstained from refutations which presented a more available field for plausible display. Nor have I ever touched upon opposite opinions save when there was danger lest by keeping silence I might leave my readers in doubt and perplexity. Nor does it escape me how much more captivating an attraction it is, to supply materials for ambitious display, by bringing together a mass of things of every sort; but nothing was of more importance with me than to consult for the edification of the church. May that God who has inspired me with this purpose, grant that the success may correspond.

GENEVA,
July 23rd. 1557.

TO THE READER.

After the admirable analysis of the Psalms given in his Epistle Dedicatory to the Reader by Calvin, whose erudition, piety, and trials, invest his observations on this portion of Scripture with the highest claims to consideration, it would be presumptuous and superfluous to detain the reader by any remarks of a similar kind. To the same source the reader is also referred for such information as a Preface might convey on the character of this Commentary; for an attentive and devout perusal alone can satisfy him, to his unspeakable profit, that it is the work of one who wrote from the experience of a pious heart, and with whom the desire of communicating instruction in the heavenly doctrine, in the most simple and effectual manner, was paramount to every earthly consideration.

Notwithstanding, the Latin in which he wrote, for majesty, when the subject required it, for purity, and in short every quality of a perfect style, would not suffer by a comparison with that of Cæsar, Livy, or Tacitus. It is also apparent that he was intimately conversant with the philosophical systems and histories of ancient and modern times, but in the present work he has drawn upon these resources as one who was perfectly familiar with them, but in anything rather than a pedantic spirit, and solely for the solid uses of illustration.

The present English version has been formed on the basis of that by the celebrated Arthur Golding, which will account for its exhibiting the peculiarities and in some instances the singular beauties of the style of his day. The original has been carefully consulted throughout, and it is hoped that the present version will be found a readable and faithful representation of the sense of Calvin, which is all that has been attempted.

Oxford,
October 25, 1839.

JOHN CALVIN'S
COMMENTARY ON THE PSALMS.

PSALM I.

Whether it was Esdras or some other person that gathered the Psalms into one volume, he seems to have placed this psalm in the beginning, instead of a preface, with the intent to exhort all men to occupy themselves in God's law. The sum of it is, that those are happy who apply their hearts to heavenly wisdom, and that the heathenish despisers of God shall come to an ill end, though for a time they think themselves blessed.

BLESSED is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, and standeth not in the way of the wicked, and sitteth not in the seat of scorners:

2 But delighteth in the law of the Lord, and occupieth himself in his law day and night.

1 *Blessed is the man, &c.*] The great object of the Psalmist, as I have above observed, is to shew that it shall always go well with the devout worshippers of God, who seek continually to walk in the way of his commandments. For since the greater part of the world laugh at their simplicity, as though they did but lose their labour, it was needful that they should be fenced with this shield: that all men are wretched without God's blessing, and that God is favourable to none, but to such as seek instruction from him. But because so great is the corruption that has ever overrun the world, that the common course of living is little else but a falling from God's law, the prophet, before he pronounces the followers of the law to be happy, warns them to take heed that they are not carried away with the ungodliness of the multitude. For first, declaring his abhorrence of the wicked, he tells them it is not possible that any man should apply his heart to meditate on God's law, unless he gather in and sever himself from the fellowship of the ungodly; a salutary warning doubtless, for we see how unadvisedly all men plunge themselves into the snares of Satan, or at least how few guard against the enticements of sin. Therefore lest we should

have so little forecast, it is necessary for us to understand that the world is fraught with deadly corruption, so that the first step to live well is to forsake the company of the ungodly, which otherwise would infect us with its contamination. And because in the first place the prophet has enjoined the godly to beware of evil hindrances, let us also follow the same order. His affirmation that those are blessed who shun association with the wicked, would not easily be admitted on the principles of ordinary sense and reasoning. For although all men naturally covet blessedness, yet we see with what unconcern they indulge themselves in their sins; yea the further each of them has turned from righteousness to follow his own lust, because thereby he obtaineth his heart's desire, he is counted blessed. But on the contrary the prophet teaches here, that no man can be duly minded to the fear and worship of God and to the study of his law, until he is fully persuaded that all ungodly men are wretched, and that all shall be involved in the same destruction with them who depart not far from their company. But because it is a difficult matter so to shun the ungodly, with whom we are intermixed, as that we may be altogether estranged from them; the prophet, to augment the force of his exhortation, employs an accumulation of phrases. And first of all he forbids us to walk in their counsel; secondly, to stand in their way; and lastly, to sit in their seat. The sum is, that God's servants must endeavour utterly to abhor their manners. But forasmuch as Satan insinuates his deceptions craftily, lest any man should be beguiled unawares, the prophet shews how men are wont to turn aside from the right way by little and little, for they proceed not at the first step to the proud contempt of God. But when they have once begun to give ear to evil counsel, then Satan leads them further away from time to time, till they fall headlong into open rebellion. Therefore the prophet begins with *counsel*, by which term I understand the wickedness which as yet shews not itself openly. Then he names the *way*, which is taken for the manner and course of living. And thirdly, he uses the expression the *seat*, by which word he denotes figuratively the hardihood that is conceived from the continued custom of living. And with reference to the same notion ought the three words, *walk*, *stand*, and *sit*, to be understood. For when a man wilfully goes astray after his own depraved lusts, the custom of sinning makes him drunk, so that forgetting himself, he becomes hardened in his own naughtiness, which the prophet calls *to stand in the way*. At length there follows a desperate stubbornness, which he denotes by the metaphor of sitting; whether there is the same climax in the

Hebrew words רשעים, חטאים and לצים, let other men consider. I think there is not, unless it be in the last word. For they are called *scorners*, who, casting away all fear of God, presume to sin the more boldly, because they escape unpunished, and scoff fearlessly at God's judgment, as though they should never come to account for it. As, however, the Hebrews call the openly profligate חטאים, it is not amiss that they are matched with the professed manner of living. Now if in the time of the prophet it was necessary for the devout worshippers of God to withdraw themselves from the fellowship of the ungodly, that they might frame their life aright; then at this day, the more corrupt the world is, the more carefully must we shun all pernicious fellowship, that we may be preserved pure from the defilements thereof. And yet the prophet not only commands the faithful to withdraw from the ungodly, lest their infection should taint them, but his warning extends thus far, that no man should be a schoolmaster of ungodliness to himself. For it may happen that he who has taken no blemish by evil example, may, notwithstanding, become like to the evil by adopting their manners of his own accord. In the second verse he does not simply pronounce those blessed that fear God, as in other places, but he designates godliness by the study of the law; whereby we are taught that God is not worshipped aright otherwise than when his word is obeyed. Then must not every man devise a religion after his own fancy, but the rule of godliness must be fetched from God's word. When in this place he speaks only of the law, it is not to be so taken that the rest of the scripture should be of no account; but rather, forasmuch as the whole scripture is no other than an exposition of the law, under the head itself is comprehended the whole body. The prophet therefore commends the law with its appurtenances. Neither could it otherwise stand, as I have just asserted, that it was also his purpose to exhort the faithful to the reading of the Psalms. And when he requires in the first place that *the delight of the godly should be in the law of the Lord;* by these words we may learn that constrained and servile worship of God is in nowise allowable; and that none other are meet disciples of the law, but those that come to it with a cheerful mind, and whom the doctrine thereof delights in suchwise that they account nothing more to be desired, or more sweet, than to profit in the same. But from this love of the law flows the continual study of it, which the prophet mentions soon after. For it cannot be but that they must willingly exercise themselves in it, whosoever they are that are touched with the love thereof.

3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the river side, which shall yield his fruit in due season, and whose leaf shall never fall away; and whatsoever he doeth it shall prosper.

He illustrates also and confirms the preceding sentence by a simile. For he shews in what sort they are to be counted happy that fear God: namely, not because they enjoy a transitory and vain mirth for a moment only, but because their estate standeth fast. And there is a kind of tacit contrast between the freshness of the tree that is planted in a moist plot, and the fading beauty of that which, though it flourish fairly for awhile, does, notwithstanding, soon wither by reason of the barrenness of the soil. For as concerning the ungodly, we shall see in Psal. xxxvii. 35, *That they are like the cedars of Lebanon.* For they swim in such abundance of all wealth and honour, that there is nothing wanting to make them happy in this world. But how much soever they may rear their heads on high, and fling their branches far and wide, yet forasmuch as they have no root in the ground, nor even supply of moisture to maintain their sap, all their beauty either vanishes and dies forthwith, or else withers away. It is only the blessing of God, therefore, that maintains us in a prosperous state. They who gather from this simile that the reason why the faithful bring forth their fruit in due season is, because they wisely discern when good is to be done, in my judgment, run into philosophic subtleties which are not within the scope of the prophet's meaning. [For he meant nothing else but that God's children flourish continually, and are always watered with the secret grace of God, so that whatsoever befalls them is a furtherance of their welfare; whereas either the sudden storm catches up the ungodly, or else excessive heat consumes them. And when he says they bring forth their fruit in due season, by this expression he indicates their timely ripeness; because although the ungodly make a shew of precocious fruit, yet do they yield none that comes to perfection.

4 So are not the ungodly, but as the chaff which the wind scattereth.

He might have compared the ungodly to a tree that soon withers, as Jeremiah, xvii. 6. likens them to heath that grows in the wilderness. But not content with this simile, he casts them down with greater despite; and

for this reason, that he hath not an eye to that prosperous state wherein they vaunt themselves for a short time, but rather weighs what manner of end awaits them after all. Therefore the meaning is, that though the ungodly have prosperity now, yet soon they shall be like chaff; because when the Lord shall have brought them low, he shall toss them hither and thither with the breath of his indignation. Moreover, by this manner of speech the Holy Ghost teacheth us to behold with the eye of faith that which otherwise might seem incredible. For although the ungodly tower up like a high tree, yet should we assure ourselves that he shall be as chaff or dross, when God listeth to bring down his loftiness with his breath.

5 Therefore shall not the ungodly stand in judgment, nor the wicked in the congregation of the righteous.

6 For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, and the way of the ungodly shall perish.

In the fifth verse the prophet shews that the state of happiness is founded upon a good conscience; and therefore it is no marvel if the ungodly suddenly fall from their imagined happiness. But there is involved in it a sort of concession; as if the prophet should tacitly confess that the ungodly indeed think well of themselves, and have their triumphs, as long as things are confounded in the world, as robbers revel in woods and caves while they are out of the judge's sight. But he says that things shall not be so jumbled evermore, and that when they shall be brought into due order, the ungodly shall be dispossessed of these their delights, so that they may perceive that they were but drunken when they thought themselves happy. We see now how the prophet avouches the ungodly to be miserable, because happiness is an inward good of the conscience. He denies not that before they are driven to the trial, all things go well with them, but he denies that they are happy unless they are sustained by solid and steadfast integrity. For by the trial of the good their integrity is found at length to be genuine. Moreover, although the Lord daily execute the judgment by which he putteth a difference between the righteous and the reprobate, yet because it is done in part only, it is meet we should raise our eyes higher, if we purpose to behold the congregation of the righteous whereof mention is made in this place. Even in this life the prosperity of the ungodly begins to fade away, as often as God putteth forth tokens of his judgment. For then being awakened, they are forced, whether they will or

no, to acknowledge that they are banished from the company of the godly. But because this is not accomplished always, nor in all men, we must patiently wait for the day of the last revelation, in which Christ shall separate the sheep from the goats. Yet it is to be held, that generally the ungodly are appointed to misery, because their consciences are goaded with guilt, and because as often as they are called to give an account of their life, being as it were awakened from sleep, they perceive it was but a dream that they thought themselves happy, without looking into themselves. Nevertheless, forasmuch as things here seem to be tossed to and fro at a venture, and it is not easy in so confused a medley to discern what the prophet means, therefore he calls us back again to another principle, namely, that God is the judge of the world. Whence it follows, that it cannot be possible but it must go well with the upright and just, and that utter destruction must light upon the ungodly. Therefore, although to outward appearance the pureness of the worshippers of God profits them nothing at all, yet as it is the peculiar office of God to defend them and to watch over their safety, they must of necessity be happy under his protection. And thence again we may gather, that because he is a sure avenger of wickedness, he will at length destroy all the ungodly though he wink at them for a time. Wherefore, lest their imaginary felicity may deceive us, let us always, when in distress, place before our eyes the providence of God, to whom it belongeth to adjust the state of the world according to a perfect rule.

PSALM II.

David boasts that his kingdom, although it be assailed with a huge multitude of enemies, and mighty power, shall notwithstanding be perpetual, because it is upheld by the hand and power of God. He adds also that it shall be enlarged, even to the uttermost coasts of the earth, in spite of his enemies. He therefore exhorts kings and other magistrates to lay down their pride, and with meek hearts to take the yoke that the Lord layeth upon them, because it is in vain for them to struggle to shake it off. Nevertheless, this figure contains a prophecy concerning Christ's future kingdom.

WHY do nations rage, and why do people murmur in vain?

2 The kings of the earth band themselves, and the princes are assembled together in council, against the Lord, and against his Christ.

3 Let us break their bonds asunder, and let us cast their yoke from us.

We know how many conspired against David, and endeavoured to obstruct him, that he should not reign, by whom he might be put into such fear, according to the sense of the flesh, that he might forthwith cast away all hope of being king. And no doubt he had to wrestle sorrowfully against most grievous temptations. But because he was well assured in himself, that he had attempted nothing rashly, as ambition and evil appetite move many to innovation, but rather felt thoroughly persuaded, that while he coveted no such thing, he was created king by divine appointment, he raised himself with lofty confidence against all the world; in like manner as in these words, in the greatness of his soul, he pours contempt as well on kings as on their armies. He confesses indeed that he has a hard battle to fight, for that not only a small band, but whole nations with their kings conspire against him. But afterwards he boasts courageously that their so doing is in vain, because they wage battle, not against a mortal man, but against God himself. Moreover, it is uncertain whether he spake only of intestine enemies, or extend his complaint to foreigners also. Certainly, inasmuch as enemies rose up against him on all sides, and that as soon as he had pacified the tumults among his own people, his neighbours also, taking their turn, were at deadly feud with him, I willingly admit that he alludes here, as well to the Jews as to the Gentiles. For it were a hard manner of speech, that under many nations and people, but one nation should be meant; and also that mention should be made of many kings, if he meant only Saul. Besides this, it agrees better with the completeness of the figure, that sundry sorts of enemies should be banded together; for we know that Christ had to do, not only with enemies of his own country, but also with foreigners, inasmuch as the whole world laid their heads together to contrive his destruction. And first, the Jews began to rage against Christ, as they had before done against David; and afterwards a like madness seized other nations also. This is the sum; that although they that go about to overthrow him be able to make never so strong force, yet are their uproars vain, and their devices to no purpose. In attributing commotion and uproar to the people, and meeting to take

counsel to kings and states, he spake most aptly. He intimates also by the way, that when the kings have consulted never so long and never so much, and when the people have poured out all their spite, they shall all avail nothing. But the reason of his assurance is to be marked; namely, that he thrust not himself into the sovereign power rashly, or of his own head, but only followed the calling of God; whereby he gathers, that in his person God is assailed, because it cannot be but that God must shew himself the defender of the kingdom of which he is the founder. For in honouring himself with the title of Messias, or Anointed, he gives to understand that he reigned not but by the authority and command of God, because the oil that was brought to him by the hand of Samuel created him king of a private person. David's enemies thought not that their violence was directed against God; yea, they would have denied stoutly that they meant any such thing; yet, not without cause David setteth God against them, as though they levelled all their assaults directly at him; because, purposing to weaken the kingdom that he had set up, they run upon him with blind rage. For if they are rebels against God, as many as resist the power ordained of him, the same must much more truly apply to that holy kingdom, which was confirmed by a special and peculiar ordinance. But now it is high time to come to the substance of the figure. For, that David prophesied of Christ, appears certain from this, that he knew his own kingdom was but as a shadow. And that we may learn to refer to Christ whatsoever David in times past sang of himself, this principle, (which we shall meet with everywhere in all the prophecies,) is to be held, that he, with his posterity, was created king, not so much for his own sake, as to represent the image of the Redeemer. And although this is to be often repeated, yet for the present my readers must be shortly warned, that forasmuch as that temporal kingdom was as it were a kind of earnest to the people of old time, of the everlasting kingdom which at length was thoroughly established in the person of Christ, the things that he utters of himself, are not violently or allegorically wrested to Christ, but truly prophesied of him. For if we mark well the nature of the kingdom, it were a vain thing to leave the end or mark, and to halt in the first shadow of it. That Christ's kingdom is here described to us by the spirit of prophecy, the apostles are sufficient witnesses, who, seeing that the ungodly conspire against Christ, arm themselves to prayer with this doctrine; Acts iv. 24. But that our faith may not be subject to any cavillings, it appears plainly by all the prophets, that the things which David hath witnessed

concerning his own kingdom, fitly agree with Christ. Therefore let this be taken for certain, that whosoever they are that submit not themselves to the government of Christ, they make war against God. For seeing it pleaseth God to rule us by the hand of his Son; untruly do they profess not to refuse his obedience, who refuse to obey Christ himself. For it is a true saying, *whosoever honoureth not the Son, neither honoureth he the Father that sent him;* John v. 23. And it deeply concerns us to hold fast this inseparable connexion, that like as the Majesty of God hath shone forth in his only-begotten Son, so the Father will not be reverenced and worshipped but in his person. Now from this argument a twofold comfort may be drawn; for as often as it shall happen that the world rages, in order to disturb or hinder Christ's kingdom, if it come to our remembrance, that that is fulfilled, which was predicted of old, no strange thing shall abash us: yea rather, it shall greatly profit us, if we compare the things that the apostles experienced, with the examples before us. Of itself Christ's kingdom would be quiet, and from thence issues true peace to the world; but it happens through the default and malice of men, that it never raises its head without trouble, wherefore it is no wonderful or unwonted thing, if the world begin to rage and swell as soon as a throne is setting up for Christ. Then follows the other comfort, that when the ungodly have laid their forces together, although trusting in their innumerable multitude, riches, and armies, they not only spew out proud blasphemies, but also furiously assault heaven itself, yet may we safely laugh them to scorn, relying upon this one word, that they are challenging God in heaven. Wherefore when we see Christ wellnigh overwhelmed with multitude of enemies and violence; let it come to our mind, that they make war against God, with whom they shall not prevail, and therefore all their continual attempts against him shall prove but foolish and vain. Let us learn further, that this doctrine extends to the whole tenour of the Gospel. For, that prayer of the apostles, which I cited even now, clearly witnesses, that it ought not to be restrained to the person of Christ alone.

3 *Let us break, &c.*] It is a prosopopœia, or feigning of person, wherein the prophet bringeth in his enemies speaking, that he may the better express their wicked and traitorous device; not that they openly professed themselves rebels against God; for they rather covered their wilfulness by any pretence whatsoever, and presumptuously boasted that God was on their side. But inasmuch as they were utterly determined, by all means, righteous or unrighteous, to cast

down David from the regal authority, whatsoever their mouths spake, yet their consulting was to this end, how they might overthrow the kingdom that was set up by God. And surely I doubt not, but that by terming his government, metaphorically, *bonds and a yoke*, in their person, he obliquely taunts their pride; for he represents them speaking disdainfully, as it were, of some slavish and shameful subjection, according as we see that all Christ's enemies take it no less to heart if they are compelled to be subject to his government, than if they were put to the uttermost shame.

4 He that dwelleth in heaven will laugh them to scorn: the LORD will have them in derision.

5 Then will he speak unto them in his wrath, and he will trouble them in his sore displeasure.

6 I have anointed him my King upon my holy hill of Sion.

After David has rehearsed the tumult, the counsels and pride, the array and resources, the strength and attempts of his enemies, against all these things he setteth God's might; and that it will be fully bent against them he concludeth hence, that they fight against his decree. And as a little before, by terming them kings of the earth, he marked their frail and feeble state; so now again, by naming God the dweller in heaven, he by this high title extolleth his power; as if he should say, it continueth safe and unimpaired, whatsoever men may do against it. For though they vaunt themselves never so much, yet shall they not reach unto heaven; but rather while they think to confound heaven and earth together, they do but leap like grasshoppers, and the Lord meanwhile beholdeth their frantic turmoilings quietly from on high. And he attributes laughter unto God for two causes; first, that we may know that he hath no need of great hosts to repress men that wickedly rise up against him, as though it were a hard and painful matter, but that he will do it with ease as often as he listeth; and secondly, he intimates, that when God suffereth his Son's kingdom to be troubled, he stayeth not his hand because he is either occupied elsewhere, or is not able to succour, or neglecteth the honour of his Son; but delayeth his revenge for the moment, until their madness be full ripe, and then maketh he them a laughingstock. Let us assure ourselves therefore, that although God stretch not out his hand immediately against the ungodly, yet hath he his own time to laugh; and although we be fain to weep in the meanwhile, yet let us assuage the bitterness of our

sorrow, yea, and wipe away our tears with this reflection, that God dissembleth not as one that is sluggish or weak, but because he is willing with quiet contempt for a time, to confound the frowardness of his enemies. By the adverb *then*, he intimates the fit time of judgment; as if he had said, After that the Lord shall have seemed to take no note of the wicked practices of them that set themselves against his Son's kingdom, he will suddenly turn his course, and shew that nothing offendeth him so much, as such boldness. Moreover, he attributes speech unto God, not to instruct the enemies withal, but only to prove their madness; yea, by the word *speak*, he means nothing else but a manifest shewing forth of God's wrath, which the wicked perceive not till they feel it. David's enemies thought they might easily have destroyed David, for that he coming out of a humble shepherd's cot, had rashly taken upon him to be king. The prophecy and anointing of Samuel was, with them, no better than a farce. But when God had at length overthrown them, and settled David in the kingdom, he spake, not so much with his tongue, as with his hand, to shew openly that he himself was the founder of that kingdom. Therefore let us learn that David treats here, of speaking by things, when the Lord, uttering no word at all, nevertheless maketh manifest his determination. So also, as often as by shewing forth his wrath, he maintaineth his Son's kingdom against the ungodly, howsoever he hold his peace, in very deed he yet speaketh aloud. Afterwards David, under the person of God, shews more plainly, how his enemies rush wickedly against God himself, namely, because they cannot away with him whom he hath made their king. The sum of it is, that though the wicked behave never so frowardly, yet at length they shall feel what it is to make war against heaven. This pronoun *I* is also emphatical, whereby God signifieth that he is further off from earthly men, than that the whole multitude of them can one jot deface the glory of him alone. Therefore as often as man's power is terrifying to us, let us bethink ourselves how much God alone is able to outweigh them. Now in these words is set forth to us the unchangeable decree of God, which should sustain our faith amid the troublous storms of the world; and that because God will doubtless maintain to the end his Son's kingdom, whereof he is the founder. Therefore, whatsoever men practise against it, let this one thing suffice us, that God's anointing cannot be made void by them. Mention is here made of *Mount Sion*, in express words; not because David was anointed there first, but because afterwards, in due time, the truthfulness of the prophecy was shewn there by the ceremony of solemn conse-

cration, and established by bringing it to pass. Now although David has by these words called back himself and others to God's promise; yet he gives us at the same time to understand that his kingdom is holy and inseparable from the temple of God. But this agrees more truly with Christ's kingdom, which we know to be both spiritual and also joined with the priesthood; yea, and to be the chief part of God's service.

7 I will preach the law, whereof the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

8 Desire of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost coasts of the earth for thy possession.

I will preach, &c.] That David might take all pretence of ignorance from his enemies, he assumes the office of a preacher, to publish God's decree; or at least he protests that he comes not without an assured and manifest warrant of his calling; as if he should say, he went not forth unadvisedly to usurp the kingdom, but he brought with him the command of God, without which it had been a rashness for him to have mounted to that estate. Howbeit, this was more truly fulfilled in Christ: and no doubt David, by the spirit of prophecy, had a special eye unto him. For thus are all the ungodly made inexcusable; that not only by miracles Christ proved himself to have been endowed with lawful power from God, but also made it manifest by the preaching of the Gospel. Yea, and the self-same witness soundeth daily through the whole world. For although the apostles first of all testified that Christ was created king by God the Father, and after them the teachers executed the same office; yet, inasmuch as they all came as ambassadors in Christ's stead, he rightly and fitly challenges to himself alone, whatsoever he hath done by them. And therefore, Eph. ii. 17. Paul attributes to his person, whatsoever the preachers of the Gospel have done in his name. *He came*, says he, *and preached peace to those that were near and far*. Hereby also is the authority of the Gospel the better established; for that although it be published by others, yet it ceases not to be called Christ's. For as often as we hear the Gospel at men's hands, we must think, it is not so much they, as Christ that speaketh by their mouth. And this is a singular benefit, that lest we should doubt of the majesty of Christ's kingdom, he himself alluretb us gently to him by

his own voice. In respect whereof we must be the more cautious, that we do not wickedly refuse the law which he publisheth. *Thou art my Son.* Surely David, in that he was a rightful king, might lawfully have been accounted God's Son, according as we know that princes, because they excel other men, are called gods, and the sons of God. But in this place, God, by honouring David with this singular style, advanceth him not only above all mortal men, but also above the angels, a point which the apostle weighs wisely, Heb. i. 5. when he tells us that there was never any angel that had so much said to him. For although David was inferior to the angels; yet notwithstanding, so far as he represented the person of Christ, he was worthily preferred a great way before them. Let us know therefore that by the Son of God in this place, is not meant some one son among many, but the only-begotten Son, that he alone should transcend all others both in heaven and in earth. And when God saith he hath begotten him; it should be considered as referring to man's understanding or knowledge. For David was then begotten of God, when his election manifestly appeared. And therefore these words, *this day*, denote the time of his manifestation; because that as soon as it was known that he was created king by God, he came forth as one lately begotten of God, inasmuch as so great honour could not be given to a private person. The same also must be observed with regard to Christ. For he is not said to be begotten, in any other respect than forasmuch as the Father witnessed him to be his Son. I know that many have expounded this place, of Christ's eternal generation; and they have curiously descanted upon these words, *this day*, as though it betokened an everlasting act without time. But Paul is a more faithful and more apt interpreter of this prophecy, who in Acts xiii. 33. calls us back to that manifestation of Christ's heavenly glory that I spake of. Therefore he is said to be begotten; not that he then began, as in respect of himself, to be the Son of God, but that he was then shewn to the world, to be so. Again, this begetting must not be understood of the mutual relation between the Father and the Son; but only signifies that the same person which had been hid in the secret bosom of the Father, from the beginning, and afterwards darkly shadowed under the law, was known to be the Son of God, from the time when he came forth with his evident marks; according as it is said, John i. 14; *We have seen his glory, as of the only-begotten Son.* At the same time, however, we must bear in mind what Paul teaches, Rom. i. 4. namely, that *he was shewn to be the Son of God in power, when he rose again*

from death. And, therefore, that which is spoken here, bears principally upon that day. But whatsoever it be, the Holy Ghost marketh out here that solemn and due time of his manifestation, as he also does hereafter, Ps. cxviii. 24. *This is the day which the Lord hath made, let us rejoice and be glad therein.*

8 *Desire of me.*] It is true that Christ entreated his Father, John xvii. 5. *to deck him with the glory which he had with him from the beginning, before the world was made.* Still, the more natural sense is, that the Father will deny his Son nothing that concerneth the enlarging of his kingdom to the uttermost bounds of the earth. But as though it were a new thing, Christ is brought in offering himself to his Father with prayer, to the intent that God's free bountifulness may appear more conspicuous in this behalf, that he hath vouchsafed to set his Son over all the world. For although, in respect that he is the everlasting Word of God, the sovereign power and majesty have evermore been of right in his hand, in suchwise as that no augmentation may increase them; yet notwithstanding he is exalted in the flesh, in which he took upon him the form of a servant. Wherefore this is not a commendation of his Godhead only, but it extends to the whole person of the Mediator; *because that after Christ was abased, there was given him a name which is above every name, that all knees should bow before him*, Phil. ii. 9. And although we know that David obtained renowned victories and reigned far, so that many nations paid tribute to him; yet was that not fulfilled in him which is spoken here. For if we compare his kingdom with other monarchies, it was inclosed within narrow bounds enough. Therefore, lest this prophecy should be spoken in vain, and inappropriately concerning the extent of his dominion, we must needs come to Christ, who only hath subdued the whole world to himself, and brought all lands and nations under his dominion. And therefore in this place, as in many others, the calling of the Gentiles is foretold; lest the Redeemer that was to be sent of God might be surmised to be but a king of some one nation. Now, that we see this kingdom dispersed, defaced, and mangled with many ruins, proceeds from men's own maliciousness, which makes them unworthy to be under so happy and desirable subjection. Nevertheless, although men's unthankfulness be a hindrance that Christ's kingdom flourishes not thoroughly; yet defeateth it not the effect of this prophecy, inasmuch as Christ gathereth together the dispersed remnants from all places, and in this miserable desolation holdeth his own knit together with the holy bond of faith; so as, not some one corner only, but all the whole world

lies under his dominion. Besides this also, deal the ungodly never so insolently, and reject they never so much his sovereignty; yet can they not by their stubbornness disannul his authority and power; whereunto pertains also that which follows next.

9 Thou shalt bruise them with an iron rod, and break them in pieces as a potter's vessel.

This is expressly stated to the end we should know, that Christ is furnished with power, whereby to reign over men, even whether they will or no, strive they never so much against him. For David intimates, that all shall not receive his yoke willingly, but many shall be stiffnecked and rebellious; whom notwithstanding he shall subdue by main force, and compel to obedience. Truly the goodly beauty of the kingdom that he speaks of, shines forth so much the more, in that his people of their own accord meet him at the day, to shew themselves obedient to him. But forasmuch as the greater part exalt themselves against him with intractable fierceness; it was needful that this also should be added: that this king should have the upper hand of such impediments. And of this warlike prowess, God began to give an example in the person of David, by whom we know that many enemies were vanquished and overthrown by force of arms. But the real truth appears in greater fulness in Christ, who, not with sword or spear, but with the breath of his mouth, striketh the ungodly even to their utter destruction. Nevertheless it may seem strange, that whereas the Prophets in other places commend Christ's meekness, mercy, and gentleness, he is here described as rigorous, austere, and full of terror. But because this strict and formidable sovereignty of Christ is set forth for no other reason than to strike his foes with fear; it is by no means contrary to the courtesy wherewith he gently and sweetly cherisheth those that are his. For like as he sheweth himself a loving shepherd to his meek sheep; so he must needs handle the wild beasts somewhat roughly, to the intent he may either correct or restrain their truculence. Therefore in Psalm cx. 5. after that the obedience of the godly sort is commended, immediately also is Christ armed with power, wherewith to destroy kings and their armies that are against him, in the day of his wrath. And surely both of them are aptly attributed to him, because he is sent by the Father *to cheer the poor and comfortless with tidings of salvation, to heal the sick, to bring the sorrowful and afflicted out of the darkness of death into the light of life.* Isaiah, lxi. 1.

Again, because many through their unthankfulness provoke his wrath against them; in order to subdue their obduracy he doth, after a sort, put on a new character. But the question is, what this iron sceptre is, that God hath put into Christ's hand, wherewith to break his enemies in pieces. I answer, that the breath of his mouth sufficeth him instead of all weapons, as I avouched even now out of Isaiah. Therefore though Christ stir not a finger, yet thundereth he strongly enough against his enemies by his speaking, and bringeth them to nothing with the rod of his lips alone. For fret they, kick they, and resist they like madmen never so much, they shall be compelled at length to feel him their judge, whom they would not honour for their king. To be short, they are beaten into powder divers ways, till they become his footstool. How the doctrine of the Gospel is a rod of iron, we may gather from Paul, 2 Cor. x. 4. where he teaches that Christ's ministers are armed with spiritual weapons, to cast down all loftiness which lifteth up itself against Christ. Verily I confess that even the faithful are slain in sacrifice to God, that he may quicken them with his grace, because we must first be brought low, before Christ stretch out his hand to us. But forasmuch as he doth in suchwise train his scholars to repentance, that he seemeth in nowise terrible to them; but rather by shewing them his shepherd's crook, doth presently turn their sorrow into joy, he is so far from using his iron sceptre to break them with, that he rather shroudeth them under the wholesome shadow of his hand, and holdeth them up with his power. Therefore this breaking has reference to none but the rebels and unbelievers, who succumb to Christ not as subdued by repentance, but as overpowered with despair. Howbeit, although he speak not to all men by his own mouth; yet forasmuch as he pronounceth by his word whatsoever judgment he executeth upon them, he is truly said to slay the ungodly person with the breath of his mouth, 2 Thess. ii. 8. And he exposes their foolish pride by a beautiful similitude. For although their waywardness be stubborn, and more than stony; yet he sheweth them to be more brittle than earthen vessels. Forasmuch, however, as we see them not forthwith broken in pieces which withstand Christ, but rather the weak Church is like a potsherd under their iron hammers, it is fitting that all the godly should be warned to regard Christ's daily judgments as preludes of the horrible destruction which awaits all the ungodly; and to look patiently for the last day, wherein he shall utterly consume them with the flame of his coming. In the mean time let it suffice, that he ruleth in the midst of his enemies.

10 And now, ye kings, bethink yourselves; be learned, ye that are judges of the earth.

11 Serve the Lord in fear, and rejoice unto him in reverence.

After that David, in the character of a preacher of God's judgment, has set forth God's vengeance, he now takes upon him the part of a prophet and teacher, exhorting the unbelievers to repentance, lest, when it is too late, they be driven to feel that those threatenings were not idle and vain. And he speaks to kings and princes by name, who are not very easily made meek. Moreover, the empty pride of self-wisdom, wherewith they are puffed up, suffers them not to learn what is rightful. Now if David spare not even kings, who seem unrestrained by laws, and exempted from the common ranks, much more does his exhortation touch the ordinary sort of men; that he may humble all men, even from the highest to the lowest. By the adverb *now*, he signifies that it behoves them to amend betimes, because they shall not always have the like opportunity. Meanwhile he hints to them, that as yet it is available to warn them, because there is a place of repentance, if they make speed. When he bids them to be learned, he obliquely reproves their fond trust in their own wisdom; as if he should say, the beginning of true wisdom is to lay down all haughtiness, and to submit a man's self to Christ's government. Therefore, how much soever the princes of this world may please themselves with their own shrewdness, we may be sure that they are but downright fools till they become the lowly scholars of Christ. Again, he appoints the method of their being wise; commanding them to serve the Lord in fear. For inasmuch as upon trust of their own high estate, they dream themselves to be privileged above all other men, this pride blinds them more than anything, so that they cannot find in their hearts to be subject even unto God. Therefore, until they have learned to stand in awe of him, he tells them they are void of right understanding. And certainly because carelessness hardens them, so that they withdraw their obedience from God, they must first be brought in awe by compulsion, that their rebelliousness may be corrected. However, lest this service to which he calls them should be irksome, he teaches them by the word *rejoice*, that it is a sweet and desirable service, because it brings matter of true gladness. But lest they should, after their own manner, run riot, and, being drunken with vain gladness, surmise themselves happy when they are enemies to God, he

exhorts them once again, by the words *in fear*, to lowly and meek submission. For there is a contrast between the merry and cheerful state of a quiet conscience, while the faithful rejoice that they are in the favour of God of whom they stand in awe, and the unbridled frowardness to which the contempt and forgetfulness of God draws the wicked. The prophet therefore gives us to understand, that as long as proud persons rejoice immeasurably according to the lust of the flesh, they sport with their own destruction; and that the only true joy,—the joy that turns to welfare,—is to rest in the fear and awe of God.

12 Kiss the Son, lest haply he be angry, and ye perish out of the way, when his anger is kindled but for awhile: blessed are all that put their trust in him.

He expresses yet more distinctly what manner of fear and service God requireth. For since it is his will to reign by the hand of his Son, and that he hath imprinted marks and tokens of his glory in his person, the legitimate trial of our obedience and dutifulness towards him, is reverently to embrace him whom he hath appointed king over us, according to this saying, John. v. 23; *He that honoureth not the Son, neither honoureth he the Father that sent him;* for under the term of *kissing*, he implies the solemn testimony or token of honour, which subjects were wont to yield to their kings. The sum of it is, that God is defrauded of his honour, if he be not served in Christ. Now although the Hebrew word בר signify both a son and an elect person, yet take it which way we will, the sense will continue the same. For Christ was indeed chosen of the Father, and all power is given unto him, that he alone should transcend both angels and men, for which cause also he is said to be sealed by God, John, vi. 27, because a peculiar dignity was bestowed upon him, which exempts him from all created things. Some interpreters expound it *lad* or *servant*, but that is a somewhat hard and more strained meaning. For my part I willingly keep still the name of son, which answers well to the former sentence, where it is said, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.* That which follows immediately after, intimates that the pride of such as despise Christ shall not go unpunished; as if he had said, forasmuch as Christ is not despised without dishonour to the Father who hath decked him with his own glory, the Father will not suffer such a treason to pass unrevenged. And lest they might

fondly nourish themselves with hope of some long delay, and draw groundless satisfaction from their present ease, he tells them plainly, that his wrath will be kindled in an instant. For we see that if God wink for a time, and bear with the ungodly, their hardihood increases by his gentleness, because they conceive not his judgments but according to the sense and experience of the flesh. I know that the Hebrew word כמעט is otherwise expounded by some; namely, that as soon as God's wrath is kindled, yea but a little, it is all over with the reprobate. But it is more convenient to apply it to the time, lest the proud be hardened through their long continued apathy, and so think to escape unpunished by reason of God's long sufferance. Moreover, although it seem to be a rendering of a cause, and that the adverb which is put there is often among the Hebrews a yielding of a cause, yet I would not depart from the received translation. Nevertheless, I thought good to express it by the adverb *when*, which denotes as well a cause as a time. *To perish out of the way* some expound, for your froward ways, or for your wicked way of living. Others resolve it thus: lest your way perish, according to this saying of the first Psalm in the sixth verse; *The way of the ungodly shall perish.* But I prefer the other sense, that David tells them plainly how the wrath of God will cut them suddenly off, when they think themselves to be but in the midst of their race. For we know that the despisers of God are wont to flatter themselves in prosperity, and as it were to run riot in wantonness. Therefore, not without cause, does the prophet threaten, that when they shall say, peace and rest, supposing themselves to be a great way from their end, they shall be suddenly cut off, 1 Thes. v. 3. The close of the Psalm tempers that which was spoken before of severity; for Christ's iron rod, and God's fiery wrath, would strike fear into all men without difference, unless this comfort had been added. Therefore, after he had treated of the horrible judgment that hangs over the wicked, he now by setting forth the sweetness of God's grace, allures the faithful and godly worshippers of him to hope well. The same order also St. Paul observes, 2 Cor. x. 6. For when he has told them that he has vengeance at hand for the unbelievers, then, directing his discourse to the faithful, he adds immediately, *after that your obedience shall be fulfilled.* Now we understand the prophet's meaning. For inasmuch as the faithful might have extended to themselves the rigour of which he makes mention, he opens to them a sanctuary of hope to flee unto from God's wrath; like as in Joel, ii. 32. after he has cited the ungodly to the dreadful judg-

ment-seat of God, he presently adds a comfort, *whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* For in my opinion, this exclamation, *Blessed are all they that put their trust in him,* is to be read apart: and although the pronoun *him* may be referred as well to God as to Christ, yet in my judgment it is more suitable that it should be understood of Christ, whom he had commanded before to be kissed.

PSALM III.

David being driven from his kingdom, although utter despair of all things weighed him down, calls notwithstanding upon God, and supports himself with his promise against mighty terrors, and against the mockings and cruel assaults of his enemies; yea, and against even death itself, which then thrust itself before his eyes. At length he congratulates himself and the whole Church on the happy issue of all.

[*The song of David, when he fled from the face of Absalom his son.*]

How bitter David's sorrow was in the conspiracy of his own household against him, which arose through the treason of his own son, it is easy for every one of us to conjecture from the feelings of nature. Besides, knowing that this plague was laid upon him by God for his own fault, for defiling another man's wife, and for shedding innocent blood, he might have sunk down altogether and been overwhelmed with distress, if he had not raised himself by God's promise, and hoped for life even in death. Again, inasmuch as he makes no mention of his sins, it is to be inferred, that but half his prayer is comprised in this Psalm. In that God punished him for his adultery and his wicked betrayal of Uriah, it is not to be doubted that at first he was distressed with grievous and sore torments of mind. But after having been humbled before God, and recovered heart, he then, assured that he had obtained forgiveness, settles it that God was on his side, and that he would always be the defender of his kingdom. He complained of his son and of all his rebellious party, because he knew that they rose up wickedly to disannul God's decree. So if at any time God use wicked and graceless men as scourges to chastise us, it behoves us first to weigh the cause; namely, that we suffer nothing which we have not deserved; that this reflection may lead us to repentance. But if our enemies assault God rather than us, let this confidence immediately succeed, that we shall be saved by His protection, whose promised grace they despise and trample on.

2 Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! Many are they that rise up against me.

3 Many there be that say unto my soul, there is no help for him in God. Selah.

Sacred history shews that David was not only dispossessed of his princely power, but in a manner forsaken of all men, so that he had almost as many foes as subjects. For although a few of his faithful friends accompanied him in his flight, yet escaped he in safety, not so much by their defence, as by the coverts of the wilderness. No marvel, therefore, though he were afraid of the multitude that came against him, for nothing could have happened more unlooked for than so sudden a rebellion. But it was a token of rare faith, that being stricken with so great fear, he dared to lay his complaint in the bosom of God. And doubtless the only remedy to assuage our fears, is to cast upon him whatsoever cares trouble us; as, on the other hand, they must needs lie prostrate that think themselves not regarded of him. Again, he expresses the pride of his enemies more plainly and vehemently, in that they scoff at him as a castaway and a desperate person. And he gives us to understand, that their pride grew hereupon, because they hoped that he had been forsaken of God. Perhaps also in these words is indirectly noted their wickedness, for that they made no reckoning of God's help in preserving the king whom he had chosen: and this second is the more probable. For Absalom promised not himself the favour of God, but passing over all regard of Him, hoped for victory by his own power. David therefore advisedly represents him and the rest speaking in this wise, to shew that with monstrous and outrageous contempt of God they were excited to madness: as if they made it matter of no account at all that he had so often been delivered out of the greatest perils. For although the ungodly when they rise up to destroy us, burst not out openly into so great pride, as to deny that God's favour shall any thing avail us, yet, forasmuch as they either impute all things to fortune, or else determine that according as every man excels in strength, so shall he speed, and therefore rush on fearlessly right or wrong, as though it were all one with them, to have God displeased or favourable to them, it is hence certain that they make no account of his favour, and that they flout the faithful, as if it could do them no good to be under the hand and protection of GOD. The translation of some, *Many say of my soul*, agrees not with this place; for although ל be now and then taken in this

sense among the Hebrews, yet David's mind now, was to express somewhat more; namely, that his heart was after a sort wounded with the railings of his enemies. Therefore, in my opinion, the word soul signifies the seat of the affections. And with this meaning corresponds that which we shall see in another place, Psal. xxxv. 3; *Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.* David, therefore, by his own example teaches, that though the whole world with one voice should move us to despair, we must rather give ear to God alone, and evermore nourish ourselves inwardly with hope of the help that he hath promised; and because the ungodly go about to murder our souls, we must defend them by prayer. Concerning the word Selah, the interpreters agree not among themselves. Some maintain it to be a mark of affirmation, and to signify as much as truly, or verily, or so be it; others take it for time without end. But forasmuch as סלל signifies to lift up, the opinion of those is probable who think that by this word is denoted the lifting up of the voice in harmony. Although it must at the same time be observed that the modulations of the voice in singing were adapted to the sense, and that thus the harmony was assorted with the meaning; or, as they say, with the subject-matter; like as now after David has made his moan that his hope was laughed to scorn, as though it booted him nothing to be defended by God, he lays a stress upon this blasphemy, which sorely wounded his heart; in like manner as soon after, when he has sustained himself by a confirmation of his assurance, he will repeat the same word.

4 And thou, Lord, art a shield before me, my worship, and the lifter up of my head.

5 With my voice have I cried unto the Lord, and he hath heard me from the hill of his holiness. Selah.

The copula *and* should be resolved into the adversative article *but*, because David, setting words full of confidence against the wicked frowardness of his enemies, testifies, that whatsoever they say, he nevertheless reclines on the word of God. Now, that he had before conceived an assured hope, appears hereby, that there is no mention made of the chastisement laid upon him by God's hand. But rather trusting upon the help of God, he courageously encounters his foes, who, purposing to depose him, a lawful king, from his seat, made ungodly and wicked war against him. Finally,

having acknowleged his own fault before, he weighs nothing here but the present case. For thus becomes it the servants of God, that are troubled by the wicked, after they have lamented their sins and resorted humbly to God for mercy, to set their eyes to the beholding of their present case, so that they may doubt not but God will be their helper when they are troubled undeservedly. Especially when God's truth is assaulted by their troubles, it becomes them proudly to lift up their souls in the confidence, that without doubt God will maintain the faithfulness of his promises against such perfidious braggarts. For otherwise David might seem to have taken these things upon him wrongfully, when he had bereft himself of the worship and help of God. But because he was persuaded that he was not utterly fallen from God's favour, but that his election stood unshaken, therefore he takes heart again to hope well. And first of all, by likening God to a shield, he means that he is defended with his power. Hence likewise he gathers that he is also his worship, because it was his will to be the maintainer and defender of the royal estate which he had vouchsafed him. And hereupon comes that boldness of his, that he durst walk with a head erect.

5 *With my voice.*] He declares that he was never yet so afflicted with adversities, or cast down with impious scornings, but that he turned his prayers to God. And it was an infallible proof of his faith, that he exercised it by praying, even in the midst of his distresses. For nothing is more unbecoming, than by biting upon the bit, to withhold our groanings from God, if we give credit to his promises. Neither is their a pleonasm or superfluity in these words; but David advisedly mentions his voice, the better to express that how much soever the ungodly rage against him, yet he was never dumb, but the name of God sounded loud in his mouth; which was a difficult thing in so sore and hard a temptation. And it may be that he sets this voice of his praying against the tumultuous outcries of such as either blame fortune, or rail upon God, or else make a howling without measure, and in short who, with irregular violence pour out the extravagance of their sorrow. But it seems to me that David means chiefly, that among the blasphemies of his foes, wherewith they endeavoured to overwhelm his faith, he himself was not tonguetied, but rather lifted up his voice unto God, whom the ungodly surmised to have been turned against him. And to animate all the godly to the like constancy he adds, that he cried not in vain. Whereas he says *from the hill of his holiness*, or, which is the same, *from his holy hill*: it is not well to expound it of heaven, as some take it. I con-

fess indeed that heaven, in other places, is often called God's holy palace; but in this place, I doubt not but David had an eye to the ark of the covenant, which at that time stood upon mount Sion. And, he affirms expressly that he was heard from thence, though he were compelled to flee into the wilderness. The sacred history reports, 2 Sam. xv. 24. that when Abiathar the priest commanded the ark to be carried by the Levites, David would not suffer it. And therein appears the wonderful faith of the holy man, for although he knew that the Lord had chosen the ark for his dwelling-place, yet he had rather be torn from that holy symbol of God's presence as it were from his own bowels, than to make any innovation beyond the decree of heaven. And now he boasts that though he were bereft of the sight of the ark, yet did not the distance of the place prevent his approaching unto God by his prayers. By which words he intimates, that he kept the middle way, so as neither to despise the visible sign, which God had appointed in consideration of the rudeness of the times; nor superstitiously tying himself to place, to conceive any gross and carnal opinion of the glory of God. Thus he did not idly scatter words which would vanish into air, as unbelievers are wont to do, who also pray, but are in doubt to what place they ought to direct their speech. David turned himself right towards the tabernacle, from whence God had promised to be merciful to his servants. Hence sprang boldness to pray; and the same boldness wanted not success. In these days, forasmuch as that is fulfilled in Christ which was shadowed in old time by the figures of the law, we have a much more ready passage opened us unto God; provided we stray not wittingly and willingly from the way.

6 I laid me down and took my rest; and I awaked, because the Lord upholdeth me.

7 I will not be afraid of thousand thousands of people who have pitched their tents on every side against me.

If we keep the past tense in the verbs, David expresses a wonderful and almost incredible constancy of mind, in that among many deaths he slept as soundly as if he had been out of all danger. And surely although he were tossed in the midst of the merciless waves of distresses, yet it is certain, that they must have been assuaged by faith, that he might rest on God, were he never so much disquieted. Even so the godly always come out as conquerors of all fear, like as despair,

even in the smallest perils, overwhelms the ungodly that rest not upon God. Some suppose that there is here an enallage, or change of tenses or times; and therefore they translate it in the future tense, *I will lay me down and sleep*, because soon after he adds a verb of the future tense, *the lord shall uphold me*. But because he signifies here a continued act, I thought it not needful to alter the tense in the three first verbs. Still it should be known, that this quietness is not to be referred peculiarly to the time of his affliction, or at least not to be restrained to it; for in my judgment, David rather shews how great good he had attained by faith and prayer; namely, the peaceable and quiet estate of a well settled mind. This he signifies metaphorically; saying, that he had gone through with the ordinary affairs of this life quietly; I, says he, have not lain waking and restless in my bed, but I have slept soundly, whereas such manner of sleeping is not wont to befall those that are full of thought and fear. But let us note this by the way, that David became thus quiet by reason of God's defence, and not of drowsiness in himself. For even the wicked are kept asleep through an intoxication of mind, while they dream that they have made a league with death. But it was otherwise with David, who had no rest in any other respect, but because he was upheld by God's power, and defended by his help. In the next verse he enlarges upon the inestimable efficacy of this trust, which all the godly conceive from the protection of God. For like as the power of God is immeasurable, so believe they that it shall continue invincible against all manner of assaults, outrages, machinations and forces of the whole world. And undoubtedly, except we yield this honour unto God, our hearts shall always be fainting. Wherefore, when in dangers, let us learn not to measure God's help after the manner of man, but to despise whatsoever terror meet us in our way, inasmuch as it is a small matter, whatever it be that men devise against God.

8 Up Lord, save me O my God; for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheekbone, thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

9. The Lord is he that saveth; thy blessing is upon the people.

8 *Up, Lord,*] Forasmuch as David in the former verses boasted of his quiet state, he might seem now to desire of the Lord that he may continue in safety all his life long; as

though he had said, Lord, seeing thou hast overthrown mine enemies, proceed with this thy favour, and continued it to the end. But forasmuch as it is no novelty with David in his Psalms to mingle sundry affections together, it seems more likely that after he has introduced the mention of his trust, he returns again to his former prayers. Therefore he desires to be saved, because he was in present danger. That which follows, concerning the smiting of his enemies, may be expounded two ways; either that in praying he calls to remembrance his former victories; or else, that feeling God's help and obtaining his desire, he adds thanksgiving: to which meaning I willingly assent. First, therefore, he relates that he fled to God for help in his distress, and humbly requested him to save him; and, afterwards, for sending him it, he yields him thanks; whereby he testifies his acknowledgment that he received deliverance at God's hand.

9 *The Lord is he that saveth.*] Because ל is now and then taken for מן among the Hebrews, some not inaptly translate it, *Salvation is of the Lord.* Nevertheless I have followed the simpler sense, that salvation or *Deliverance* is only in God's power. By which words he not only claims the office and praise of saving for God alone, tacitly opposing God's hand to all human succour; but declares that although a thousand deaths hang over a man, yet can they be no hinderance to God, that he should not be of sufficient ability to save him; or rather that he should not speedily without any ado send forth his help which he hath always in readiness in himself. In the end of the Psalm David affirms that this was not given so much to himself separately, as to the whole people, lest the welfare of the universal church, which was grounded upon his kingdom, should go to wreck. David therefore acknowledges that the reason why the wicked conspiracy was dispersed, was because God had a care to preserve his church. And therefore we gather from this place that the church shall evermore be delivered from all evils, because God, who hath sufficient power to save, will never withdraw his grace and blessing from it.

PSALM IV.

After that David has prayed God to help him, immediately turning his discourse to his enemies, he triumphs over them as a conqueror, upon trust of God's promise. Therefore by his own example he teaches us, that as often as adversity presses upon us, or distress weighs us down, we must call to mind the promises of God, wherein the hope of salvation is set forth; that by holding this shield before us, we may break through all assaults of temptation.

[*To the chief chanter upon Neginoth. A song of David.*]

It is uncertain at what time this Psalm was composed, saving that from the tenour of it a probable argument is elicited, that he was then an outlaw and a banished person. I therefore refer it to the time that Saul persecuted him. And yet, if any man had rather understand it of his other exile, which he was driven too by the conspiracy of Absalom, I will not greatly strive with him. But as, a little after, there is one word which indicates that he had a long struggle, that agrees better which I have alleged in the first place. For we know with what variety of affliction he was harassed before he could emerge, from the time that Saul began to be his enemy. Concerning the words which this verse contains, I will only observe briefly, that whereas some translate this word לַמְנַצֵּחַ *for ever*, as though the Psalm had been set to some ordinary ditty, I reject it as a forced translation. Others conjecture, with more truth, that he is called מְנַצֵּחַ who excels and surpasses others. But because all of them are not agreed what kind of excellence and dignity it should be, let it suffice us that by this word is indicated the master of the choir. For the name of conconqueror I approve not; because, although it answer to the present matter, yet it in nowise agrees with other places where we shall see the same repeated. I derive this word *Neginoth* from נָגַן which signifies to strike, and therefore I doubt not but it was an instrument of music. Whence it follows that this Psalm was to be sung, not only with a loud voice, but also with playing upon instruments, which were ruled and ordered by the said master of whom mention is made.

2 Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness; in my distress thou hast set me at large, have pity upon me and hear my prayer.

In these words is David's faith shewn; who being brought to extremity, yea and in manner destroyed with a long series

of troubles, did not surrender himself to sorrow, nor was so discouraged in heart but that he resorted to God as his deliverer. For David by his praying testified that when he was utterly bereft of all worldly succour, he had still hope remaining in God. Moreover he calls him *the God of his righteousness*, as if he should say, the maintainer of his right, because all men everywhere condemned him, and his innocency was overwhelmed with the slanderous reports of his enemies, and the perverse judgments of the common people. And this is to be noted carefully. For whereas nothing is more bitter to us than to be condemned without cause, and together with wrongful violence to suffer slander; yet notwithstanding this it daily befalls the saints to be ill spoken of for doing well; and it is expedient for them to be so exercised, that turning away from all enticements of the world, they may depend wholly upon GOD alone. Therefore righteousness is taken here for a good cause; whereof David, making God the witness, complains that men are become malicious and wrongful towards him; and by his own example he teaches us that if at any time our guiltlessness appear not to the world, yet it becomes us not to be discouraged in heart, because our avenger is in heaven. Even heathen men have said, that, There is no better stage for virtue than a man's own conscience. But yet this comfort far exceeds it, that we know ourselves to stand in the sight of God and his angels, when men vaunt against us wrongfully. We see that Paul was endued with this fortitude, 1 Cor. iv. 5. for when many malignant reports of him were spread abroad among the Corinthians, he appealed to the judgment-seat of God. With like confidence Isaiah, l. 6. and in the verse following, despises whatsoever slanders his foes cast upon him. Wherefore the only stay of our patience, when there remains no place in the world for uprightness, is to have an eye to God, and to hold ourselves contented with his righteousness. Notwithstanding, the question may be urged, how, seeing that the whole cleanness of men is mere filthiness before God, they may dare to put forth their righteousness in his sight. As to David, the solution is easy, because he boasts not of his own righteousness, but in respect of his enemies. For his conscience well assured him that he attempted nothing but by the calling and commandment of God; and therefore he does not amiss to call him the defender of his right. Hence we gather that David, that he might the more cheerfully match God against the whole world, adorned himself with this title. When he twice requires to be heard, therein is expressed to us both the vehemence of his grief, and the earnestness of his praying.

In the second place also he shews whereupon he conceives hope to obtain, to wit, upon the mercy of God. And surely, as often as we crave any thing, it becomes us to make our beginning from this, That the Lord of his free goodness will relieve our miseries.

Thou hast set me at large.] Some think that David promises himself that which he had not yet tasted of, and that in his hope he anticipates the realization of God's grace; but in my judgment he rather recites God's former benefits wherewith to confirm himself for the time to come. For so are the godly wont to call to remembrance the things that are available to the strengthening of their faith. And hereafter we shall meet with many such places, where David, to raise up his faith against terrors and perils, will bring together many experiences, whereby he had learned that God is evermore present with his servants, and that they are never disappointed of their desires. And it is a metaphorical expression, whereby he signifies that there was way made for him to escape, even when he was besieged and enclosed round about. I suppose that the *distress* of which he speaks, is referred no less to his mind than to his present case; for David was not so steeled but that his adversity cast him into piteous anguish of mind.

3 Ye sons of men, how long will ye blaspheme mine honour, delight in vanity, and seek after lies? Selah.

4 But know ye that the Lord hath chosen unto himself the man that is bountiful, even the Lord will hear me when I call upon him.

3 *Ye sons of men.*] This most sweet fruit did David's prayer yield him, that, taking heart, he was able not only to repulse the fury of his enemies, but also to challenge them of his own accord, and fearlessly to despise whatsoever they wrought against him. Wherefore, that our trust may abide steadfast, it is not meet for us to come into the lists furnished with any other armour than this same, as often as we are challenged by the wicked. Now the effect of the matter is, that inasmuch as God's will is to maintain David with his defence, it is in vain that all mortal men endeavour to destroy him, although otherwise they be able to do never so much harm. And by terming them the sons not of Adam or of some common person, but, *of men*, he seems by the way to glance at their arrogance; for I agree not with certain Hebrews who think that the nobles are denoted; but

rather it is an ironical concession, whereby he pours scorn on their stateliness, because they seemed noble and wise men to themselves, whereas indeed it was only blind rage that impelled them to wicked attempts. In the words *how long*, is condemned their depraved wilfulness; for David intimates that they were not stirred with some sudden impulses only, but that there was rather a stubborn purpose of mischief settled in their hearts. For had not their own maliciousness bereft them of their senses, God had proved himself to be David's defender by many trials, which would have compelled them to cease from their enterprise; and because they were fully bent to put down with shame him whom God had set upon the royal throne, he asks them how long they will continue in seeking to deface his honour. Now then it is to be noted, that although he were burthened with all kind of reproach both among high and low, yet he courageously holds fast the possession of the honour granted him by God, and doubts not but that God will at length clear it, with what stains soever it have been unworthily blotted. *Will ye delight in vanity.* In these words he partly upbraids his enemies with depraved passions, wherewith he saw they were led away, although they falsely pretended a godly zeal; and partly mocks at their folly, that in fighting against God they still pampered themselves with hope of success. And it is a most pointed rebuke. For how much soever the ungodly run headlong into all wickedness with gross malice, yet they soothe themselves with deceitful flatteries, lest any feeling should make them have remorse. David therefore cries out, that though they are wilfully blind, and varnish their unrighteousness with counterfeit colours, yet it profits them nothing. And truly though the ungodly soothe themselves, yet when they shall be dragged to solemn trial, it will always be found certain that the reason why they are deceived is, that from the very beginning their purpose was to deal deceitfully. Now then out of this place must we take the shield of invincible steadfastness, as often as we shall see ourselves overmatched with the craft and subtlety of the wicked. For what engines soever they assault us with, if so be that our conscience be clear, God will stand on our side; against whom they shall not prevail. Excel they never so much in wit, be they of never so great power to hurt us, have they their means and helps in never so great readiness, and examine every thing with keenest foresight, yet notwithstanding whatsoever they invent, it shall be but leasing and vanity.

4 *Know ye that he hath chosen.*] It is a confirmation of the former sentence. For he shews how the cause of his boldness is that he leans upon God, the author of his kingdom.

And surely we may then safely boast against our enemies, when we are assured that our calling is of God. Therefore David boasts not here at all of his own strength, or of his riches, or of his hosts, whereby he got himself the kingdom. But forasmuch as he was chosen by God, he gives us to understand, that their many attempts shall be without success, because they shall feel that GOD is against them; under whose hand they must needs sink. And first he says he was set apart by God, whereby he means that he was advanced not at the pleasure of men, or by his own lust, but by the appointment of God. For whereas פלה in Hebrew signifies to separate, in this place it is referred to excellence; as if he had said, you will admit no king but such as is chosen by your own voices, or such a one as pleases you; but it is the peculiar prerogative of God to advance whom he listeth. No doubt but that by the word *bountiful*, he claims to himself the right of being king, from the very fact or effect; as though he alleged the mark or badge of his calling. For it was truly said in the old proverb, that, Mercy is the peculiar dowry of kings. Now to whom God vouchsafeth that honour, that they should not be as inanimate idols, he is wont to give endowments requisite to the execution of their office. Some take the word חסיד passively, not for a well-doer, but for one that is placed in the throne by the favour of God. But because I meet with no example of this signification in the scripture, I think it the safest way to follow the common meaning, which is, that God hath chosen him king who answereth his vocation aright, because he is merciful and liberal. Hence he infers that God will hear him as often as he calleth upon him. For herein doth God chiefly prove his own faithfulness, that he forsaketh not his own work, but evermore defendeth those whom he once embraceth. Whereby we are taught to walk without fear in our ways, because it shall never be in vain whatsoever we take in hand at his appointment. Let this be held as a maxim, That they shall never be destitute of God's help, that proceed sincerely in their race: without which comfort the faithful must needs quail every moment.

5 Tremble, and ye shall not sin; commune with your own heart in your bed, and be still.

6 Sacrifice ye the sacrifices of righteousness; and put your trust in the Lord.

5 *Tremble.*] Now he exhorts his enemies to repentance, if perchance their madness be still curable. And first

of all he bids them tremble, or be troubled, by which word he rebukes their dulness, in running on headlong, utterly void of the fear of God, and of lively sense. And certainly that great boldness in all the ungodly, that they hesitate not to commence war against God, arises from this, that their drunken recklessness hardens them, and their wilful apathy makes them callous, as it were, in their folly, while forgetting both God and themselves they follow whithersoever lust leads them. He saith that the best medicine to cure their madness, so that they may sin no more, will be to awaken from their drowsiness, and to begin to stir and to tremble; as if he should say, as soon as ye shall have shaken off your drowsiness, and senselessness, it will come to pass that your desire of sinning will abate. For the reason why the ungodly are troublesome to the good and simple, and cause so much confusion is, that they are too much at peace within themselves. Afterwards he counsels them *to commune with themselves in their bed;* that is to say, to make a reckoning with themselves at leisure, and, as it were, in a deep recess; which is contrasted with their intemperate heat. And in the end he enjoins them to be still. Now it is to be noted, that the cause of this stillness, is the agitation and trembling, whereof he made mention before. For if lunatic rashness have carried any into sin, the first means for them to recover their right wits, is to awaken themselves from their drowsiness to fearfulness and trembling. After this follows calm and deliberate reflection; then do they consider and reconsider whither they have cast themselves: and so at length, they who erst were medlers with everything, learn to be sober and quiet, or at least restrain their insane impetuosity. *To commune in your bed,* is spoken according to common custom and experience; for we know that as long as we are among company in the day-time, our wits are drawn divers ways, and we often discern and judge amiss by the outward appearance; whereas solitude makes us more careful. Again, the sense of shame hinders not a man from recounting his own faults. David therefore withdraws his enemies from witnesses and umpires, that they may examine themselves more truthfully and candidly. And this exhortation pertains to us all; for nothing is more easy than for one to deceive another with hollow flattery, until each man enter into himself, and commune alone with his own heart. Paul, citing this place, Ephes. iv. 26. or at least alluding to David's meaning, follows the Greek translation, *Be ye angry and sin not;* but yet he hath wisely and aptly applied it to his purpose. For he there teaches, that

whereas men do sinfully pour out their anger against their neighbours, they should rather be angry with themselves, that they might abstain from sin; and therefore he bids them rather to fret inwardly and to be angry with themselves, and afterwards to be offended, not so much at the offenders as at their offences.

6 *Sacrifice ye.*] Many suppose that David counsels his enemies to give a token of their repentance; and certainly I confess, that sacrifices were partly commanded in this respect, that they should stir men to newness of life. But when I consider what kind of men they were that assaulted David, I doubt not but he censures their hypocrisy, and represses their delusive boasting. For inasmuch as David wandered like an outlaw in deserts, or caves, or mountains, or in foreign realms, he might seem to have been a stranger to God's church. And surely he was commonly accounted as a rotten member, cut off from that body of the saints. In the mean while the ark of the covenant was in the possession of his enemies, they held the temple, and they were the first in offering sacrifices; and therefore they vaunted themselves against David, with the same boldness wherewith we know that hypocrites are evermore puffed up. Neither is it to be doubted, but that they proudly abused God's name, as though they only had been his true worshippers. Therefore just as Jer. vii. 4. twitteth the ungodly with their false pretence of the temple of the Lord; so also David denies that God is pacified with outward ceremonies, because he requireth pure sacrifices. For there is here a tacit opposition between the sacrifices of righteousness, and the vain and spurious ceremonies, with which the counterfeit worshippers satisfy themselves. The effect of it therefore, is, ye brag that God is on your side, because ye have free access to his altar, to kill your sacrifices there with great pomp; and as for me, because I am banished out of the holy land, and kept from coming to the temple, ye think that God careth not for me. But ye must worship God after a far different sort, if ye will hope for aught at his hand. For your unclean sacrifices wherewith you defile his altar, do but provoke his displeasure; so far are they from procuring you God's favour. Therefore we may learn by this place, if we have to deal with the corruptors of true religion, that, although they thunder out his name with full mouth, and vaunt themselves of his outward service, yet may their bragging be safely reproved, because they offer not the right sacrifices. But by the way we must beware, that the vain pretence of godliness, nourish not in us a preposterous boldness, instead of genuine hope.

7 Many say, who will shew us any good? lift up the light of thy countenance upon us, O Lord.

8 Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than what time their corn and their wine were increased.

7 *Many say.*] Some are of opinion that David complains here of the cruel malice of his enemies, because they eagerly sought his life. But I doubt not that David compares his only wish which he longed for, to the sundry desires wherewith almost the whole world is tossed hither and thither; for inasmuch as worldly people hold it not for a principle, that those only are happy in all respects, whom God favoureth. And again, that they must so journey upon the earth, that they may by hope and patience come to a better life; they stick altogether in transitory goods; and therefore, so that the world go well with them as touching the flesh, they take no great care for God. Wherefore inasmuch as they catch some at this, and some that, for the sovereign felicity, after the manner of brute beasts, David worthily separates himself from them, setting up for himself a totally different mark. Neither do I find fault with that which some approve, that David complains of his own retinue, who when they were too weak to bear out their miseries, repined for weariness and grief, wishing that they might be at rest. Howbeit I had rather extend it further; that David being contented with the favour of God alone, should testify that he nothing regards, or heeds what others desire. And this comparison not a little enlarges the matter, while the faithful setting light by present goods, settle themselves in God, and make account of nothing so much as to find him favourable to them. First, therefore, David intimates, that all those are unwise, who, wishing prosperity to themselves, begin not at the grace of God; for thereby it comes to pass that wandering errors whirl them about. Again, he rebukes another vice; that gross and earthly men, yielding to ease and pleasures of the flesh, busy themselves in the enjoyment of them only, whence it comes also to pass, that God may go where he list; as though they had no need of him, as long as all other things answer their desire. But David, contrariwise, how much soever he lack all other goods, witnesses that God's fatherly love is alone sufficient for him. Thus therefore he sums up; Although the common sort of men gape greedily after present delights and conveniences, yet do I determine perfect bliss to be nowhere but in the favour of God. He takes *the light of God's countenance* for his cheerful look; like as again,

God's face seems dark and lowering upon us, when he sheweth any token of his wrath; and, by a beautiful metaphor, it is said that this light *is lifted up*, when shining in our hearts it engenders trust and hope. For it were not enough for us to be beloved of God, unless the feeling of the same love came home to us. But now shining into our hearts with his Holy Spirit, he cheereth us up with true and substantial joy. And this place teaches, that though they swim in never so great abundance of all things, yet are they miserable, who are not fully purposed to rest themselves in God; while contrariwise, the faithful, though they are tossed among many troubles, are thoroughly blessed, even in this one respect, that the fatherly face of God shineth bright upon them, enlightening all darkness, and, as a man may say, quickening even death itself.

8 *Thou hast put gladness.*] By another comparison he better expresses and illustrates the force of his affection; namely, that having obtained the good that he had longed for, he envies not in the least the wealth and welfare of other men, but is eminently contented with his own lot. The effect of his meaning is, that the favourable countenance of God is more precious to him, than if he had garners full of corn, and cellars full of wine. Now although interpreters vary in the word מעת because divers of them translate it *since the time*, and so mean that David was glad of the welfare of his enemies; yet to my seeming, the other meaning agrees better; namely, that he should say he is more glad of the favour of God alone, than earthly men are of the enjoyment of worldly goods; with desire of which they are all, for the most part, inflamed. For he had said before, that they were so devoted and given over to worldly prosperity, that they cared not greatly for God; and now he adds, that they are not so glad of the great increase of their wine and corn, as he is glad of the sense of God's goodness alone. And this verse contains a profitable doctrine. For we see how earthly men, after they have despised God's grace, and engulphed themselves in their transitory delights, are so little satisfied, that the very abundance sets their lusts more on fire. Thus it comes to pass, that, in the midst of their fulness, a bewildering inquietude keeps their minds on the fret. Never, therefore, shall undisturbed peace and sound joy befall us, until the favour of God shine upon us. And although the faithful also do internally desire their own comforts, yet are they not carried headlong to them with a preposterous ardour, but can patiently find in their hearts to go without them, so that they perceive themselves to be regarded of God.

9 I will sleep together in peace, and take my rest; for it is thou, O Lord, that hath placed me alone in safety.

He concludes that he is as secure and quiet, because he is defended by the hand of God, as if he were environed with all the garrisons of the world. And we know it is a benefit to be desired above all other things, to be void of all fear, and not to be disquieted and vexed with any care. Therefore it is a confirmation of the former sentence, that he justly prefers the joy that he conceives from the light of God's fatherly love, before all other things; because inward peace of mind surpasses all benefits that may be imagined. Many divines expound this passage as though David should hope to have his enemies so reconciled to him, that he might sleep in peace with them; because God had granted him to rest without trouble or vexation of any man. But in my judgment this meaning is preferable, that he shall live as quietly by himself alone, as amidst a great host of men; because God defendeth him. For in the particle יחדו, I understand כ, which denotes similitude. And I like not that some refer לבדד unto God, translating it thus, *Thou only, O Lord, hast set me in safety;* because, by taking away the opposition between the two adverbs *together,* and *alone,* much of the grace of the sentence is lost. In short, he boasts that the defence of God alone so suffices him, that he sleeps as quietly under it, though he be left naked of all worldly succour, as if he had many watching about him, or were guarded about on all sides with a great company. Therefore let us learn by his example, to yield this honour unto God, as often as there appears no help at man's hand, that his only hand alone is as well able to maintain us in peace, as a great host of men.

PSALM V.

David being sore oppressed with the wrongful cruelty of his enemies, and apprehending still more mischief, calls upon God for help. And that he may the more easily obtain that which he desires, after having by the earnestness of his praying shewn the greatness of his grief, he first sets forth the intolerable malice of his foes, which it were unseemly for God to leave unpunished; then he introduces his own faith and patience, yea, and also comfort, as though he had no doubt at all but he should do well. Finally, he concludes, that as soon as he shall be set at liberty, the fruit of his grace shall become common to all the godly.

[*To the chief chanter upon Nehiloth. A Song of David.*]

Some translate the Hebrew word, *heritages*, and some *hosts;* the first allege this reason for their interpretation, that David prayed for the welfare of the twelve tribes; and the other allege, that being besieged by a great multitude of men, he resorted to God for succour, and so the word *upon*, shall signify *against*. But forasmuch as I like not these riddle-like titles, I willingly subscribe to the opinion of those that say it is either an instrument, or a tune of music; and as for what particular kind of one it is, I consider, not very material.

2 Hearken unto my words, O Lord, understand what I say.

3 Give heed to the voice of my cry, my King, and my God, for unto thee will I pray.

I dare not determine precisely, whether David in this Psalm bewail the wrongs which he suffered at his enemies' hands at some one time only; or whether he complains generally of his divers persecutions, wherewith he was a long time troubled under Saul. Some of the Hebrews extend it also even unto Absalom, because by these words *Deceitful and bloodthirsty men*, they think that Doeg and Achitophel are noted. But unto me it seems more probable, that when David, after the death of Saul, had gotten quiet possession of the kingdom, he committed to writing his prayers, which he had devised in his troubles and dangers. Now, concerning the words; whereas he utters one thing three ways, this repetition indicates a vehemency of affection, and a continual perseverance in praying. For he delighted

not in superfluous heaping up of words, that he should babble out divers speeches, which signified nothing; but according as he was earnestly bent on praying, so represented he his manifold groanings. Therefore it indicates that he prayed neither coldly, nor in few words only; but that he was earnest in bewailing his miseries before God, according as the vehemence of his grief enforced him; and that, because it appeared not at once what issue they should come to, he was busy in repeating the selfsame complaints. And whereas he makes no petition in express words, there is a greater force in this kind of suppression, than if he had spoken distinctly; for by concealing what he wished in his heart, he the better declares that he so laid the inward meaning of his mind before God, as that his tongue was not able to set forth. Again, the word *cry*, signifying a loud and sonorous noise, serves to shew the earnestness of his desire. For David cried not out, as it had been to the ears of one that was deaf; but the earnestness of his grief, and his inward anguish, forced him to cry out. Therefore inasmuch as the verb הגה, whence comes the noun הגיג, which the prophet uses here, signifies in the Hebrew, as well to speak aloud, as to whisper softly, this second exposition seems to agree better with this present place. For after David has put forth his words in general, he seems to divide the same into hidden moanings, and loud crying. Under the first sort he betokens a confused murmur, such as is described in the song of Hezekiah, where sorrow chokes articulate utterance. *I chattered,* says he, *like the crane and the swallow, and I groaned like the dove.* Now if at any time we are either slow to pray, or our devout impulses soon slacken, from hence must we fetch spurs to goad us forward. And because by calling God *his king, and his God,* he has quickened himself the more eagerly to hope well; let us learn to apply the same titles to like use; namely, to make ourselves more familiar with God. At the close he testifies that he takes not the bit in the teeth as the unbelievers are wont to do, but directs his groanings to God; for they, who, setting God aside, either fret inwardly, or complain to men, are unworthy that God should regard them. Some translate it *when I pray unto thee,* but it seems to me to be rather a rendering of a cause, wherein the purpose of David was to raise up his mind to confidence; assuming this general principle; That whosoever call upon God in their troubles, never suffer a repulse.

1 O that thou wouldest hear my voice betimes, O

Lord; betimes will I direct unto thee, and I will keep watch.

This sentence may also be read in the future tense of the indicative mood, thus: Thou, O Lord, shalt hear my voice betimes. But I am of opinion that it is in the optative mood, according as I have translated it. For after he has besought God to grant his request, he sues to him to make haste. And although I dislike not that some deem him to allude to the morning prayers, which were daily wont to be joined with the sacrifices, according as the law had appointed, yet I doubt not that, compelled with weariness of somewhat long delay, he wishes to have his deliverance hastened; as if he had said, as soon as I awake, this will be the first thing that I shall think upon. Therefore, O Lord, delay thou no longer the help whereof I stand in need, but accomplish thou my desires. *To direct unto God.* I take to be as much in effect, as directly to address oneself to God. Many, as though the sentence were defective, supply it with this word, *prayer*. But, in my judgment, David meant rather to declare that he was not turned hither and thither, nor haled divers ways, but had fully settled himself to flee unto God; and there is also a tacit opposition between the giddy and uncertain gadding of those that gaze about for worldly helps, or hang upon their own counsels; and the direct guidance of faith, whereby it comes to pass, that all the godly, retiring from fond enticements, betake themselves to God alone. For ערך in Hebrew, signifies to order, or dispose, and sometimes, to address, or make fit. And the sense agrees very well, in that David protests that he will in nowise be drawn in various directions through circuitous mazes, but will address himself direct to God. By the word *watch* he conveys as well hope and patience, as carefulness. For inasmuch as צפה among the Hebrews signifies as well to wait, as to look to; I doubt not, but David meant to say, that after he had disburthened his cares into God's lap, he would with trembling heart, as it were, keep watch; until it appeared in very deed that God had heard him. And although in longing there is always some inquietude, yet he that watches for the grace of God, which he longs for, will wait for the same patiently. Therefore this place teaches us, that those prayers are vain, whereunto there is not such hope joined, as may lift up men's minds, as it were, into a watchtower.

5 Because not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, thou, there shall no evil dwell with thee.

6 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all them that commit iniquity.

7 Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing; the Lord will abhor the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

Here David seeks God's favour, by declaring the malice and wickedness of his foes. It is after the manner of a broken speech, according as the saints in prayers often stammer; but yet this stammering pleases God better than all the figures of rhetoric, be they never so fine and flourishing. Moreover, the very mark that David aims at, is this, that seeing his enemies are come to the utmost point of cruelty and perfidy, it cannot be but that God will soon bring them down. His reason is grounded upon the nature of God. For inasmuch as righteousness and upright dealing please him, he concludes, that he will take vengeance of such as are reprobate and desperately wicked. For how can it come to pass, that they shall escape his hand unpunished, seeing he is the judge of the world. This passage deserves to be especially noted; for we know how sore the unbridled frowardness of the wicked abashes us; and if God do not restrain it forthwith, either we are at our wits end, as men amazed, or we faint through despair. But David from hence fetches rather matter of more assurance. For with how much the more lawlessness his enemies assail him, so much the more promptly he calls upon God his defender, whose office it is to destroy all wicked persons, because he hates all wickedness. Therefore, as often as the godly have to contend against violence, deceit, and unrighteousness, let them all learn to lift themselves up to God, that they may encourage themselves to assured hope of deliverance; according as Paul also exhorts them, 2 Thess. i. 5. It is, says he, a token of his judgment, that you now *endure the cross;* for it belongs to God's righteousness to recompense tribulation unto those that trouble you, and to give you, who are troubled, together with us, rest. And surely, otherwise, he were not the judge of the world, if he laid not up in store a recompense for all the wicked. Now we perceive the use of this doctrine, namely, that when through the frowardness of the ungodly, there enters into us a doubt, whether God regardeth us, we should learn to set this buckler before us: God, who hateth and abhorreth all iniquity, will not suffer this to escape unpunished; and although he bear with them for a time, he will at length get him up into his judgment-seat, and shew himself a revenger. Also hence is gathered an universal doctrine, That although

God work by Satan and by ungodly persons, and that he use their service to the execution of his judgments, yet is he not the author of sin, nor is pleased with sin; because the end that he purposeth is always righteous; namely, to condemn and punish those whom his mysterious providence drives whither it thinketh good. In the fifth verse some take רַע in the masculine gender, for a wicked man; but I take it rather for wickedness itself. For David declares simply, that there is no agreement between God and unrighteousness. Afterwards he comes down to the men themselves, denying that *fools shall stand in his sight.* And it is a very good consequence to say, Iniquity is hateful unto God; therefore, he will take just vengeance of all wicked persons. He calls those fools, after the manner of the scripture, who through blind sensuality run headlong into sin. For nothing is more foolish than the ungodly, who, casting away the fear of God, are impelled by a desire to do harm. Yea, there is no madness worse, than the contempt of God, by which it comes to pass, that men pervert all right. Now, then, although David do set this thing before his eyes for his comfort, yet there may also be drawn from it a profitable doctrine, tending to the fear of God. For the Spirit, by avouching God to be the avenger of wickedness, puts a bridle upon us, that we should not sin upon hope of escaping unpunished.

8 And I, in the manifoldness of thy mercy, will enter into thy house; I will worship in thy holy temple in the fear of thee.

Some think, that the word *and*, whereby the sentence is joined to that which went before, is put for *but*, as though David, comparing himself with the ungodly, declared that God would be merciful to him. But let the reader consider, if it agree not better, to take it in this sense of inferring, thus: Forasmuch as thou, Lord, canst not abide the ungodly, I therefore, being saved by thy power, will render solemn thanks to thee in thy temple for my deliverance received. If the former interpretation be preferred, then the prophet, commending simply his own dutifulness towards God, separates himself from the class of those whom he spake of. But the connexion of the place seems to require, that he should promise thanksgiving unto God. For inasmuch as he had said before, that his enemies were hated of God; he now, having conceived assurance of safety, calls upon himself for thankfulness. I will come unto

thy temple, says he, *in the multitude of thy mercy;* as if he should say, that although he might seem to be then little better than at the last cast; yet shall he by God's grace escape safe and sound. This place therefore teaches, that when extreme temptations urge us, we must set God's grace before our eyes; that we may hope well, even in the midst of the greatest dangers. Furthermore, because the flesh either maliciously vilifies God's grace, or else esteem of it after the common fashion, let us learn to extol the wonderful greatness thereof, which may suffice to vanquish all terrors. Now, then, although David's purpose was, to promise himself assured help upon trust of God's mercy, yet he shews therewithal, that when he shall be delivered, he will be thankful and mindful of it. And because hypocrites by their thanksgiving, do nothing else but blaspheme the name of God, like as they themselves are unclean and defiled, therefore he avouches, that he will come with *the fear of God*, to worship him with a pure and uncorrupt heart. And hence may be gathered a general doctrine, That there is no access open for us unto God, until he have given us a taste of his goodness; and that no man prays aright, save he, who, having felt his grace, believes, and is fully persuaded, that he will be merciful unto him. Notwithstanding, there is joined with it the fear of God; which puts a difference between the righteous and godly trustfulness, and the fleshly carelessness.

9 O Lord, lead me forth in thy righteousness because of mine adversaries; make thy way straight before my face.

10 For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward parts are very wickedness; their throat is open sepulchre; with their tongues they deal deceitfully.

11 Make them to err, O God; let them be set besides their purposes, destroy them in the multitude of their mischiefs; for they have rebelled against thee.

9 *O Lord lead me forth, &c.*] Some expound it thus: Shew me what is rightful, and make me to be wholly addicted to thy righteousness, and that for mine adversaries' sake; because it is to be feared, lest the godly, being driven by the wicked and deceitful crafts of the unrighteous, should step aside out of the right way. Most truly this meaning is godly

and profitable. But there is another exposition, more fit: namely, That God should lead his servant forth in safety through the midst of his enemies' snares; and open him an escape, even when he seems on all sides caught and hampered. Therefore in this place, as in many others, God's righteousness is taken for his faithfulness and mercy, which he sheweth in defending the faithful. And therefore the preposition *in* has the same force as *for,* or *according.* For David, wishing to have God the guide of his journey, conceives hope of obtaining it from God's righteousness; as if he had said, Lord, because thou art righteous, defend me with thine aid, that I may get clear of the wicked practices of mine enemies. The latter member has the same meaning, where he requires to have *the way of God to be made straight before his face;* that is to say, to be taken by the power of God out of the distress wherewith he was so narrowly enclosed, that, according to the judgment of the flesh, he looked never to have escaped. And so he confesses himself unable to escape the treasons of his enemies, unless God do both give him wisdom, and also open him a way where no way is. The same conduct also becomes us after his example, namely, to distrust ourselves, and when either we are at our wits end, or that the wickedness of our enemies grows too strong for us, we must make haste to God, in whose hand are the issues of death; as we shall see elsewhere.

10. *For there is no faithfulness in their mouth.*] He repeats the same complaint again, to load his enemies with the greater guilt before God, and the more provoke towards himself the mercy of God, who hath promised to succour those that are wrongfully oppressed. And this is a point worthy of note, that the more cruel our enemies rage against us, or the more wickedly they vex us, with so much the greater confidence must we send up our sighs into heaven; because God will not suffer their fury to bear sway to the utmost, but will draw forth their malice and perverse wiliness to the light. In the first place, he accuses them of unfaithfulness, that they speak no right nor truth; and he alleges the cause to be, that they are fraught with all wickedness. Then he likens them to graves, as if he should say, they were most ravenous gulfs; whereby is denoted their insatiable desire of shedding blood. In the end, he repeats again their deceitfulness; whence we gather that he was assaulted with no mean wrongs, but had to deal with most wicked enemies, such as had neither humanity nor moderation. Being so miserably oppressed, he not only continues his praying, but also takes occasion of hope,

even from his own distracted and desperate estate. Now whereas Paul, Rom. iii, 13. alleging this place, extends it to all mankind, he does it not contrary to the meaning of the Holy Ghost. For inasmuch as he takes this principle for a thing undeniable, *That under the person of David, is described unto us the Church, as well in Christ the head, as in the members,* it follows, that they must needs be accounted in the number of enemies, as many as be not born anew of God's Spirit; whether they be strangers, or of the household of the church. For David in this place cites not the Assyrians or Egyptians to the judgment-seat of God, but the degenerate Jews, who being circumcised in the flesh, boasted themselves to be of the holy offspring of Abraham. Therefore Paul in applying these words unto all men, wrests them not from their natural signification, but affirms properly, that David shewed of what manner of nature they are.

Make them to err.] Forasmuch as the Hebrew word, אשם signifies as well to cut up, or to destroy, as to sin; and is taken, by a metaphor, to signify to err, or be deluded; either of the senses agrees aptly with this place. But forasmuch as David immediately after adds, *Let them be set besides their purpose;* I doubt not, but that this second wish is allied to, and like the first. Therefore I join these two together, as the cause and the effect; first, that God should bereave them of their wits, and drive them into error; and, secondly, that he should frustrate their purposes. For whence comes it to pass that the ungodly lay their heads together in vain, and are carried away unadvisedly and without judgment, yea, and shamefully stumble; but because the Lord taketh them in their own wiliness. He intercepteth their craftiness, besotteth them with the spirit of drowsiness and giddiness, so that they doat even in smallest matters. Therefore if we are afraid of the wiliness and deceits of men, and see them to be shrewd and sharp-witted, who go about to hurt us, let us call this sentence to mind, That it is always the property of God to strike those with amazement, and so set them besides their wits, that are wise in working mischief. So shall it come to pass, that even though we be asleep, the Lord will with his breath disappoint their devices, be they never so subtle, and in the end make them a laughingstock to all the world. In fine, David wishes that God should lay his hand upon his enemies, and stay them from their wicked consultings. And surely it must needs fall out, that since Satan the contriver of all wiles prompts the ungodly to all means of doing mischief; the things that they devise deceitfully, must also

be brought to nothing by God's providence. By being defeated in their purposes, he means, that they should not compass, or bring to pass, that which they had determined. Afterwards he wishes them the punishment that they had deserved, because that in wrongfully and wickedly becoming enemies to a guiltless person, they also *rebelled against God.* Proud persons never think upon this, that poor wretched souls are of such estimation, that God is hurt in the persons of them. For they imagine that their strokes do no more pierce into heaven, than if they trampled a little dust or clay under their feet. But God yieldeth this inestimable reward to those that worship him, that he accounteth their case to be his own. Therefore, whosoever has a clear conscience, and swerves not from uprightness but is troubled wrongfully, needs not doubt, but he may set God as a buckler against his enemies.

12 And let them all rejoice that put their trust in thee; yea, let them rejoice for evermore; and cover thou them, and let them delight in thee, that love thy name.

13 For thou, O Lord, shalt bless the righteous person; thou shalt encompass them with thy loving-kindness, as with a shield.

12 *And let them all rejoice.*] Whether these words are read in the future tense, or in the optative mood, it matters not greatly to the sense. For in both ways that shall abide steadfast which the prophet meant; namely, that if he were delivered by the hand of God, the fruit of the same grace would redound to all the godly in general: as if he had said, Lord, if thou succour me, thy benefit shall not rest upon me alone, but shall extend to all the worshippers of thee; because it will come to pass, that their faith shall be the more strengthened thereby, and they shall praise thy name. Therefore, that he might the more easily obtain deliverance at the Lord's hand, he commends it for the end or effect of it; namely, that it will stir up greater trust in all the godly, and encourage them to yield praise and thanksgiving unto God. And this place teaches us, that we are unthankful towards God, if we apply not to our own use, what benefits soever he bestoweth upon our neighbours; by which benefits he intimates, that his goodness shall always be set forth for all the godly in common, and therefore there is added the cause of the gladness, namely,

for that the Lord covereth them. For as often as he sheweth himself beneficent to any one of the faithful, the rest, as I said before, must all think that he will be the same towards them also. Again; this place teaches, that true gladness springs not elsewhere, than the protection of God: because that although we be in hazard of a thousand deaths, yet must this one thing abundantly suffice us, that we are covered by the hand of God. And this will come to pass, if the vain shadows of the world beguile us not, to make us shroud ourselves under them. This also is to be noted; how he says, That those who trust in the Lord, do love his name. For it cannot happen, but that the remembrance of God must be sweet unto us, and thoroughly delight us, yea, and ravish us with love of it, after that he hath given us taste of his goodness. Like as again, all the unbelievers would that the name of God were buried, and shun the remembrance of him with horror.

13 *For thou, O Lord, shalt bless.*] He confirms the former sentence, namely, that all God's servants will take common instruction of faith in his person, because his will is, that by one example men should judge of his continual grace towards all men. And again; he puts us in mind that there is not any full and perfect joy, save that which is conceived from the sense of God's fatherly good-will. The word *bless*, when we talk of men, signifies among the Hebrews, to wish well; and when it is referred to God, it betokens as much as to prosper, as they term it, or to load one with all good things. For inasmuch as God's favour is active, his blessing bringeth forth of itself abundance of all good things. The name of *righteous* is not restrained to any one man, but implies all the worshippers of God indefinitely. Howbeit the scripture calls those men righteous, not which are accounted such for desert of their works, but such as do long after righteousness; because, after the Lord hath embraced them with his favour, in not laying their sins to their charge, he accepteth their righteous endeavour for full perfection of righteousness. Hereunto also pertains that which follows; *Thou shalt compass them with thy free favour*, or good-will, *as with a shield*. For his meaning is, that the faithful shall be thoroughly defended on all sides, because they shall in no case be destitute of grace, which both is an invincible fortress, and also brings assured welfare with it. Now then, although the word *crown*, which he uses, often signifies among the Hebrews garnishment, or decking, yet forasmuch as there is added the similitude of a shield, I doubt not but he takes it metaphorically, for to fence, or to compass about. Therefore,

the meaning is, that although never so great and sundry perils besiege the righteous, yet they shall be safe through the favour of God.

PSALM VI.

David being afflicted with God's hand, because he acknowledges himself to have provoked God's wrath through his own fault, that he may obtain relief, requests forgiveness of his sins: and therewithal bewails, that if he should be taken out of the world, he should be bereft of the power to praise God. Afterwards, taking heart, he commends the grace of God, and turns his discourse to his enemies, who triumphed at his distresses.

[*To the chief chanter in Neginoth, upon the eighth. A Song of David.*]

THE name of *Song* shews that David compiled this Psalm, wherein he expresses the passionate workings of his grief, after he had obtained deliverance from the evils he bewails. But what kind of chastisement that was, is not known. For they that restrain it to a sickness, allege no reason of sufficient weight, why they should be of that opinion. They stand upon the word אמל, which indeed signifies to be sick; but, it is more probable, that it should be taken metaphorically in this place. They allege, that Hezekiah sung the same concerning death, after he was recovered from his sickness. But in Psalm cxvi. where there is no mention made of sickness, the same complaint is read in the person of the whole church. Now, then, although we pick out of these words, that David was brought to the last cast; yet, it may be that he was cumbered with some other kind of affliction, than bodily sickness. Wherefore let us take that which is the more certain, namely, that he was stricken with some severe misfortune, or that he was hit home with some punishment, which overcast him with the shadow of death, which way soever he looked. This also is to be considered, that this Psalm was not compiled the self-same hour that he prayed; but that the prayers, which he had conceived in the time of his dangers and heaviness, were afterwards put into writing by him, when he had obtained respite; and therefore he joins his sorrowfulness, against which it is certain he had wrestled for a time, with his gladness, which ensued afterwards. And as for the word *eighth*, because we have heretofore said that *Neginoth* is an instrument of music; perhaps we may term it a harp of eight strings; and therefore I easily bear,

that it should be referred to the tune, so that it should indicate some difference of singing. However, in a matter so obscure, and of so light importance, I leave every man at liberty to conjecture what he thinks good.

2 Lord, reprove me not in thy rage, and chastise me not in thine anger.

Although, peradventure, the harm that was done unto David, was done by men; yet he wisely considers that he has to deal with God. For, ill do they thrive in their adversities, who have not an eye forthwith to their own sins, that they may think themselves to have deserved God's wrath. And yet we see how sorely almost all men are benumbed in this behalf; for whereas they cry out that they are unhappy, yet scarcely one among a hundred has an eye to the hand that striketh. Therefore, from whencesoever our afflictions come, let us learn to lift our senses presently unto God, and acknowledge him to be the judge, that citeth us for offenders before his judgment-seat, when we of our own accord turn not away his judgment beforehand. But, because it often happens, that when men are compelled to feel that God is angry with them, they rather start aside to wicked repinings, than find fault with themselves and their own sins, it is to be noted, that David does not simply ascribe unto God the particular afflictions he labours under, but acknowledges that his own sins are justly recompensed. For he quarrels not with God, as though he played the cruel enemy without just cause; but yielding to him the right of rebuking and chastising, he desires only that there may be bounds set to his punishments: by which words he declares, that God is a just avenger of sins. But, as soon as he has confessed himself to be justly corrected, he prays that he may not be dealt with according to extremity or rigour. For he does not utterly refuse punishment, for that would be unreasonable; yea, and it would do him more harm than good. But he only shuns God's wrath, which menaces destruction unto sinners. For to *anger* and *rage* is tacitly opposed *fatherly* and *gentle chastisement:* according as it appears by Jeremiah's words, x. 24. *Chastise me, O Lord,* says he, *but in thy judgment, and not in thy wrath.* Surely, God is said to be angry with sinners, as often as he punisheth them, but improperly. For he not only sprinkleth in some sweetness of his grace, to mitigate the sorrow; but also, measuring the punishments and mercifully withholding his hand, sheweth himself to be favourable unto them. Notwithstanding, forasmuch as it cannot otherwise be, but we

must needs be stricken with dreadful fear, as oft as he sheweth himself the punisher of wickedness; it is not without cause that David, according to the sense of the flesh, fears his wrath and anger. The meaning therefore is this: Assuredly, O Lord, I confess myself worthy to be brought to nought; but forasmuch as I should not be able to endure thy severity, deal not with me according to my deserts; but rather bear with my sins, wherewith I have provoked thy wrath against me. Now, then, as often as we shall be distressed with adversities, let us learn by the example of David, to flee unto this remedy, to be at one with God: for we may in nowise look to have any good success or prosperity, unless we have his favour. Whence it follows, that we shall never be free from a load of sorrow until he forgive us our sins.

3 Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak; heal me, Lord, for my bones are afraid.

4 And my soul is sore afraid: and thou, O Lord, how long?

3 *Have mercy upon me.*] Inasmuch as he calls upon God for mercy, it appears more clearly, that by the words *wrath* and *fury*, he meant not cruelty, or unmeasured rigour, but only judgment, such as God executeth upon the reprobate, whom, as children, he, in mercy to them, spareth not. For if he had complained of the wrongful severity of punishment, he would now have said no more than this: Restrain thyself, that in punishing thou exceed not the measure of my offence. Therefore, in resorting to mercy only, he shews himself to desire nothing else, but that he might not be dealt with according to his desert. And to the intent that God would be more forward to pardon him, he protests that he is wellnigh fainting; for, as I said, he terms himself weak, not because he was sick, but because he was brought low and broken-hearted. And forasmuch as we know, that the end which God purposeth in punishing us, is to humble us; as soon as we be subdued under his rod, the gate of his mercy is opened unto us. Besides this, inasmuch as it is his peculiar office to heal the sick, to raise up them that have fallen, to support them that be weak, and finally, to give life to them that be dead, the only method we need for soliciting his grace is to humble ourselves under our adversities. Now, then, after he has protested tht he reposes not the hope of his welfare elsewhere than in God's mercy only, and has piteously set forth his own abasement, he adds the effect to

the cause, requesting health at God's hand. And this order must we keep, that what good thing soever we ask at God's hand, we must know that the same flows from the fountain of his free goodness, and that we are then, and then only, delivered from punishments, when he hath had mercy upon us. *For my bones are afraid.* It confirms that which I just now observed; namely, that he conceives hope of relief by the grievousness of his calamities; because God is so much the readier to succour the wretched, as he seeth them to be more distressed, and in a manner overwhelmed. Moreover, he attributes fear unto his bones, not because they are endued with sense, but because the grief was so vehement that it crushed his whole body. Neither speaks he of the flesh, which is the tenderer part; but by the mention of bones, he means that his chief strength was made to quake. Afterwards he assigns the cause, saying, that his soul was sore afraid. For the connective particle *and*, in my judgment, has the same force as the causal particle *for;* as if it had been said, So sore and violent is the inward sorrow of my heart, that it puts out of sorts the whole strength of my body: for I like not, that *the soul* should be taken for *the life*, neither agrees it with the context.

4 *And thou, O Lord, how long?*] This elliptical manner of speech helps to express the vehemence of grief; which not only holds men's minds in distress, but also even their throats, so that it swallows up their speech in the midst of its course. The sense, however, in this broken speech, is doubtful; for some supply it with, Wilt thou punish me, or, continue to chastise me? and others read, How long wilt thou delay thy mercy? But the reason which follows next, shews that this second sense is more probable, namely, wherein David wishes that God would have regard to him. Therefore he complains that God hath now forsaken him, or that he hath no regard of him, as he seemeth to be far off from us, as often as his help, or his grace, appeareth not in very deed. But God, of his tender kindness, granteth us thus much, that we may wish him to make speed to succour us. And when we have complained of his long delay, lest our wishing or our sorrow should pass beyond their bounds, he giveth us grace also to leave the matter to his discretion, that he make haste in no other sort than shall seem good to himself.

5 Turn thee, O Lord, deliver me; save me for thy mercy sake.

6 For in death there is no remembrance of thee; and in the grave who shall acknowledge thee?

5 *Turn thee, O Lord.*] In like manner as just before he bewailed God's absence, so now he requests a token of his presence. For herein consists our happiness, if God have respect unto us; but we think him estranged from us, unless he shew himself concerned for us. That David was at this time in extremity of peril, we gather from these words, where he prays both to be delivered as it were out of the mouth of death, and also to be restored to safety. And yet is there no mention made of any sickness; and therefore I suspend my judgment as to the kind of his affliction. Nevertheless, David confirms again what he had touched upon in the second verse, concerning God's mercy; namely, that he hopes not for deliverance elsewhere than from it; wherefore men shall never find remedy for their miseries, until, forgetting their own deserts, with vain confidence in which they deceive themselves, they have learned to flee unto the free mercy of God.

6 *For in death.*] After that God hath bestowed all things freely upon us, he requireth nothing in return, but that we should be mindful of his benefits. To this point of thankfulness is referred this saying of David's, that there shall be no remembrance of God in death, nor any praise of him in the grave. For his meaning is, that if he shall by God's grace be delivered from death, he will be thankful and mindful of it. And he laments that this power would be taken from him, if he should be withdrawn from the world, because he would be no more conversant among men, to set forth the praise of God. But hence some wrongly and unskilfully gather, that the dead are void of all sense, and that none exerts itself in them; whereas, in this place, he treats of nothing but the mutual praising of God's grace, wherein men exercise themselves while they are alive. For we know we are placed on this earth to this purpose, that we should with one consent and one mouth praise God, which is the end for which we live. Now, then, although death make an end of such praisings, yet does it not follow, that the faithful souls which are loosened from their bodies, are bereft of understanding, or touched with no affection towards God. Besides this, David had, even in death itself, taken hold of God's judgment, and this had made him dumb, in respect of setting forth the praise of God. For seeing that the goodness of God only, perceived by the sense, opens our mouth to praise God, as soon as gladness is taken away, praising also must needs cease. And therefore no marvel that God's wrath, which swalloweth us up with fear, be said to quench the praising of him: and hence is solved another question, why David so greatly shunned death, as though there

had been no hope remaining when a man is out of the world. Learned men reckon up three causes, why the fathers that were under the law were distressed with so great fear of death; that is, first, because the grace of God being undisclosed before the coming of Christ, they had only dark promises to give them a taste of the life to come. Secondly, because this present life, in which God sheweth himself a father, is of itself desirable. And thirdly, because they were afraid, lest there might happen some change in religion after their decease. But these reasons seem not to be substantial enough; for David's mind was not always in that fear, inasmuch as having lived his time, he quietly yielded up his soul into the bosom of God. As for the second reason, it ought to move us as well as the fathers of ancient time, inasmuch as God's fatherly love towards us, even in this life, shineth forth with more evident proofs. But I, as I said just now, consider another thing in this complaint of David's; namely, that feeling the hand of God's vengeance against him, he is so overwhelmed with fear, that he is in a manner beside himself. The same is to be said of Hezekiah, that he prayed for deliverance, not only from death, but from God's wrath, yea, indeed from such wrath as was of no common sort; Isaiah xxxviii. 3.

7 I have travailed in my groaning, I will make my bed to swim night by night; with my tears will I water my couch.

8 Mine eyesight hath waxed dim for pensiveness; I have waxed old among my persecutors.

Although the forms of speech are hyperbolical, yet does not David dress out his sorrow poetically, but declares truly and simply how hard and bitter it was. For this is always to be believed; that he was not so sore wounded with bodily hurts, but that in bethinking himself how sorely God was displeased with him, he saw, as it were, hell gaping upon him: a sorrow which far surpasses all other sorrows. And the more sincerely each man is devoted unto God, so much the more severely is he smitten with his wrath, whence it comes to pass, that the saints, which otherwise are endued with rare fortitude, have in this respect shewed the tenderest susceptibility. And nothing hinders us from feeling in ourselves what David describes in himself, but the dulness of our flesh. Yet they that have but in a limited degree felt what it is to encounter the fear of everlasting death, will find no extravagance in these words. Wherefore we must under-

stand, that David, being afflicted with the terrors of his conscience, was not disquieted in himself after an ordinary sort, but lay almost for dead. As touching the words; he says, that his eye waxed dim, because the grief of the mind easily pierces to the eyes, and thence chiefly exhibits itself. Forasmuch as the word צתק, which I have translated, *I have waxed old,* sometimes signifies to depart out of one's place, many expound it, to have vanished away, or to have fled out of sight. Others understand that his eyes were covered with the swelling that arises from weeping; but in my opinion the first exposition seems the more simple; that David makes his moan that his eyesight fades, as it were, by old age, when he adds, *night by night;* hence we gather, that he did as it were pine away with protracted sorrow, and yet that he never left praying.

9 Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.

10 The Lord hath heard my suit; the Lord shall receive my prayer.

11 Let all mine enemies be put to shame and confounded, let them be put back and ashamed suddenly.

After David has disburdened his griefs and troubles into God's lap, he now, after a sort, assumes a new person. And no doubt but he was worn out with continual faintness, before he rose up to this confidence; for we saw even now, how he had spent many nights in weeping; and the more grievous the weariness of lingering was unto him, so much the more cheerfully raises he up himself to sing the triumph. And, directing his discourse against his adversaries, he intimates that the scoffing of wicked men against him, as if he had been a castaway and forlorn, had not been the least part of his temptation. For we know how disdainfully the pride and cruelty of such vaunt themselves against the children of God when they see them oppressed with the cross. And hereunto doth Satan move them, that he may drive the faithful to despair, when they see their hope scorned. However, this place teaches, That God's grace is the only light of life to the godly, and that as soon as God hath shewn any token of his wrath, they are not only sore abashed and dismayed, but also, in a manner, drowned in the darkness of death; and that again, when they acknowledge God to be merciful to them, they are forthwith restored to life. It is also to be noted how David repeats thrice, that his

prayers were heard; whereby he witnesses that he imputes his deliverance unto God: and in this faith he assures himself, that he had not resorted to God in vain. So also must we persuade ourselves, if we will receive any fruit of our prayers, that God will not be deaf to our requests. By the word *weeping*, he not only signifies vehemence and earnestness but also indicates that he was wholly occupied in mourning and sorrowful lamentations. Also here is to be noted, the boldness and security which David gathers to himself upon trust of God's favour. For hereby we are taught, that there is nothing in the whole world, which we may not despise, if we be fully persuaded that we are beloved of God; and therewithal acknowledge what his fatherly love may do for us. By the adverb *suddenly*, he intimates, that the godly are delivered beyond all expectation by the power of God, even when their welfare seems utterly past all recovery. For when God suddenly turneth men's troubles into a state of joy, he thereby manifesteth his power the more, and maketh it more an object of admiration.

PSALM VII.

David being charged with wrongful slander, calls upon God to be his advocate and defender, and commits the protection of his innocency to him. And first, he protests that he is conscious of no evil. Secondly, he declares how it stands greatly with God's honour, that he should execute judgment against the ungodly. Thirdly, that he may animate himself to boldness, he considers God's goodness and righteousness with himself, and lays his promises before his face. Lastly, as having obtained his heart's desire, he scorns the folly and the vain attempts of his enemies; or rather, upon assurance of God's help, he assures himself, that whatsoever they practise against him, it shall turn to their own destruction.

[*David's Siggaion, which he sung unto the Lord upon the words of Chus the son of Jemini.*]

THE Hebrew interpreters do not agree among themselves upon the word *Siggaion*, for some take it for an instrument of music; to some it seems to be a tune to sing a song to; others think it to be the beginning of some common chant, to the tune of which it was David's will to have this Psalm sung. And others interpret the Hebrew words to signify delight. In my judgment, the second opinion seems most probable, namely, that it was some kind of tune, or song; as if a man would term it a Sapphic, or Phaleusian verse; however, I press not a matter of so light importance. Again, whereas the Psalm is said to have been made upon the words

of Chus, I do not approve, though it is commonly received, that by words should be meant business. I confess indeed, that it is a usual manner of speech among the Hebrews, to put the term *word* for the matter, or cause of a thing; but, forasmuch as David soon after declares, that he was oppressed with false accusation, I doubt not but he speaks here of the very mis-report, or slander, whereof I conjecture some one of Saul's kindred, named Chus, to have been the author or minister; for there is no sufficient reason to move some to say, that Saul is obliquely noted under another man's name. By their saying David forbore his right name, because he would spare his princely majesty, I grant that David bare great reverence towards the holy anointing; but forasmuch as in another place he names Saul expressly, where he inveighs no less sharply against him, nor paints him in less black colours, why should he suppress his name rather here than there? In my opinion, therefore, here is expressed, without figure, even by proper name, the wicked informer that had brought David into hatred by a surmised crime; whether he were suborned by the king, or raised a slander upon David to purchase himself the king's favour. For we know that David was commonly very ill spoken of, as though he had been unthankful and falsehearted towards the king his father-in-law. And though Saul were of the house of Jemini, yet is there no absurdity in the matter, if we say that one of his kinsmen falsely accused David.

2 O Lord my God, in thee do I trust; save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me.

3 Lest, peradventure, he seize upon me as a lion; lest he tear me in pieces, and there be none to deliver me.

At the beginning he says he has many enemies; and in the second verse he points out some one in the singular number. And certainly, as all men's minds were inflamed against him, there was good cause why he should request to be delivered from all his persecutors. But because the impious cruelty of the king had, like a firebrand, kindled the hatred of the whole realm against that guiltless man, there is good cause also that he should turn his pen peculiarly against him too. So in the first verse he describes the thing as it was; and in the second verse he shews the fountain or cause of the mischief. Moreover, when he protests beforehand that he trusts in God, in that saying there is great force. The verb is indeed in the past tense, and therefore it ought

properly, to hav ebeen translated, *I* have *trusted in thee.* But forasmuch as the tenses of verbs are often changed among the Hebrews, I choose rather to translate it, *I* do *trust,* especially seeing it is well enough known that there is a continuous action, as they term it, conveyed. For David boasts not of a trust from which he had then fallen, but which he held fast in all his troubles. And this is a true trial of our faith, when, being afflicted with adversities, we yet cease not to hope in God. Hence also we gather, that the gate is shut against our prayers, if the key of hope open it not. Nor is it to no purpose that he calls him his Lord God; for by setting him before him as a bulwark, he beats back the waves of temptations so that they might not overwhelm his faith. In the second verse, by the similitude of a lion, he enhances the cruelty of Saul, that God should be the more inclined to succour him; even as he claims it for his office, to deliver his poor sheep out of wolves' mouths.

4 O Lord my God, if I have done this thing, if there be any misdealing in my hands;

5 If I have requited evil to him that was at peace with me, and have not succoured him that persecuted me without cause;

6 Let mine enemy pursue me, and overtake me: and let him throw my life to the ground, and hold down my glory in the dust. Selah.

4 *O Lord my God.*] Here David, to win God's favour towards himself, protests that he is vexed wrongfully, and for no offence of his. And that his protestation may have the more force, he uses an imprecation. For if he have done anything amiss, he says, he is ready to abide the blame; yea, he offers himself to most grievous punishment, if he is not utterly clear of that crime of which almost all men thought him to be as good as convicted. And inasmuch as he wishes that God should succour him upon no other condition than if he is found clear; he teaches us by his example, that as often as we flee unto God, we must in anywise look to it, that we are well assured in ourselves of the rightfulness of our case. For we do him great wrong, if we would make him accessory to the maintenance of an evil case. The pronoun *this,* intimates that he speaks of a thing commonly known; whence we may gather, that the slander which was raised by Chus, was spread far and wide. Now, then, perceiving himself condemned by the wrongful prejudications of

men, and that he could have no remedy upon earth, he repairs to the judgment-seat of God, and is content to assert his innocency before the heavenly judge; which all the godly should imitate, that they may content themselves with the judgment of God alone, against all perverse reports. Afterwards he protests more distinctly that he had committed no offence. In the end he mentions two kinds of things, namely, that he had done no wrong at all, but rather, that he had sought to do his enemies good, who nevertheless had wrought him harm causelessly. Thus therefore do I resolve the fifth verse; *If I have troubled any man that was in peace, and have not rather succoured the unworthy that persecuted me without a cause:* for seeing that David was hated of all men, as though his desire to reign had moved him to traitorous rebellion, and to lay wait for Saul, to whom he was bound by allegiance, in the former part he purges himself of that slander. The reason, perchance, why he terms Saul *him that was at peace with him,* is because that, in respect that he was a king, he ought of right to be sacred, and free from danger; so that it should not be lawful to make any hostile attempt against him. Nevertheless this word may be taken indefinitely, as though he had said, No man that hath meekly refrained from doing wrong, and behaved himself courteously towards me, can justly complain that I have harmed him. And yet men were commonly persuaded of David, that in the midst of peace he stirred up sore troubles, and gave occasion of war. Whereby it appears the better, that the only comfort which he rests upon, is that he is accepted of God. In this second part of the verse he proceeds further; namely, that he has not only been a friend to the good, but also to the bad; and that he has not only withheld himself from all revenge, but also has succoured his enemies, at whose hands he had suffered grievous wrongs. And surely, it were no very notable virtue, to love such as are good and peaceable, unless a man had also moderation and self-government, to bear patiently with those that are evil. But when a man not only requites not wrongs done unto him, but also goes about to overcome evil with well-doing, he exhibits a true specimen of divine virtue; and in so doing he proves himself to be one of God's children. For such meekness proceeds not but of the Spirit of adoption. And as for the words; because חלץ signifies *to divide,* some men, that nothing may be left to be understood, expound this place in this wise: *If I have withdrawn myself from my persecutors, and have not succoured them.* However, the other interpretation is the more received, that it should signify *to rescue,* or *to deliver from danger;* because we set aside the things that

we wish to place in safety. And so must the negative word *not* be supplied, which we see often done in the Psalms.

6 *Let mine enemy follow upon.*] It is a great token of a most virtuous confidence, that David refuses no kind of punishment, however dreadful, if he shall be found guilty of offence. If we could bring such a conscience before God, his hand would be the readier to help us forthwith. But forasmuch as it often comes to pass, that we ourselves gave occasion to those that trouble us, or else that we burn with desire of revenge, when we are wronged,we are unworthy to be succoured at God's hand, yea, and our own hastiness forecloses the gate against our prayers. In the first place, David is ready to be abandoned to the fury of his enemies, that they may lay hold of his life, and throw it down to the ground; and secondly, to be held up as a laughingstock to them, that they may speak shame of him even after he is dead; howbeit, some would have the word כבוֹד to be taken for life, that he should repeat one thing thrice. But methinks the sense will be more full, if you refer it to his renown, as if he had said, Not only let mine enemy destroy me, but also let him speak all the shame that can be of me, when I am dead, that my name may dwell in mire, or dung.

7 Up, Lord, in thy fierce wrath, advance thyself against the displeasures of mine enemies, and watch over me unto the judgment, which thou hast commanded.

8 And a congregation of peoples shall gather about thee, and for this shalt thou return up on high.

9 The Lord shall judge the peoples; judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine innocency upon me.

7 *Up, Lord.*] Against the displeasures of his enemies he sets the wrath of God, and so must we in a similar state of our affairs. For when the ungodly burn and cast forth the flames of their fury to destroy us, we must desire God that he also will wax hot, that is to say, that he shew indeed that he hath no less zeal and power to preserve us. The word *Up*, is taken metaphorically to go up into a judgment-seat, or to prepare oneself to resist. For God seemeth to sleep so long as he delayeth his help. Therefore, soon after. David beseeches him to awake, because it was in the manner of a forgetting, to leave a miserable and oppressed person destitute of all help. In the end of the verse he shews how he requests nothing but what is according to God's appoint-

ment. And this rule must we keep in our prayers, that we frame our desires according to his will; like as John also admonishes, 1 John v. 14. And surely we cannot otherwise make a faithful prayer, unless we first have an eye to what God commandeth, lest our minds start out rashly or unadvisedly to desire more than is lawful. Therefore David, that he may pray aright, leans on God's word and his promise, as though he should say, Lord, it is not any ambition, or foolish-headiness, or perverse longing that moves me rashly to request what is pleasing to my flesh; but thy word is the light that shines before me, whereupon I rest securely. For seeing that God of his own will had called him to the hope of the kingdom, it was also God's part to defend and maintain his servant whom he had chosen. Therefore it is all one as if he had said, When I was content with my private estate, it pleased thee to make me king; now therefore it behoveth thee to undertake the maintenance of this case against Saul and his companions, who endeavour to make void thy decree by assaulting me. The word עורה might also be taken transitively, for to settle, or establish David in his right. But the whole of it amounts to this; that trusting to God's call he requests him to reach out his hand to him. And therefore the faithful must beware, that they pass not these bounds, if they desire to have God a present help to them.

8 *And a congregation of peoples.*] Some restrain this place to the people of Israel, as though David should promise, that as soon as he were advanced to the throne of the kingdom, he would endeavour that the people that heretofore had been dispersed, should be knit together again in the true service of God. For under Saul, either religion had been disregarded, or such a recklessness in iniquity prevailed, that few or none had an eye unto God. Therefore, according to these interpreters, the meaning is; Lord, when thou shalt have established me king, all the people shall return from their wandering and disorderly estrangement, into the way, so as that all men may know that thou sittest over them in the midst of them; and may worship thee as their only king. But I take this to be spoken generally of many nations. For David in this place sets forth the fruit of his deliverance, in that the report thereof shall be spread abroad far and wide; as if he had said, Lord, by establishing me in possession of the kingdom, it will not only be a benefit privately unto me, upon whose person thou bestowest it, but also it will be a general avouchment of thy just judgment unto many nations, that they may turn their eyes to thy judgment-seat. For David alludes to a ring of people standing

round about their king in a solemn assembly. And in the same sense he adds, immediately after, that God, who for a time has lain still and said nothing, should lift himself up on high, to make his glory to be seen, not to one or two, but to whole nations. For there is in the expression a tacit comparison, that although there were no regard to be had of one man alone, yet it is fitting that God should keep the world in fear and awe of his judgment.

9 *The Lord shall judge the nations.*] This sentence connects itself with the verse immediately preceding. David had prayed that God would shew himself to the nations to be their judge; and now he takes it for granted, that it is the peculiar office of God to judge the nations. For the future tense of the verb, as in general sentences, implies a continuous act. Neither speaks he here of any one nation, but comprehends all nations. For inasmuch as he acknowledges God to be judge of the whole world; he afterwards concludes therefrom that he will become the maintainer of his cause, and of his right. And as often as we seem to be forsaken and oppressed, we must bethink us of this, that seeing it is God's office to govern the world, it cannot by any means come to pass, that he should give up his charge; any more indeed than he should deny himself. Out of this fountain will spring continual comfort, though never so long succession of misfortunes press upon us; because we may safely conclude, that he will be careful to defend our innocency. For it were against reason, that he who hath the government of many nations, should neglect one man. For the case standeth not with him, as with worldly judges, that he should be so busied in great and public affairs, that he should neglect private causes. Moreover, he sets forth his own innocency again, lest he might seem to make a false pretence of the name of God, as hypocrites do. For as God accepteth no persons, we cannot hope that he will stand on our side, and favour us, except our cause be good. But here it is questioned how David may boast his innocency before God, since in other places he shuns his judgment. The answer is easy, because it is not debated here, how he may answer if God should call him to account of his whole life; but, in comparing himself with his enemies, he does, not without cause, avouch himself to be righteous in respect of them. But when each holy man comes forth into God's judgment to answer for himself, there is another consideration in the matter; for the only sanctuary which they have then to trust unto, is in the mercy of God.

10 Let the malice of the ungodly cease I beseech

thee ; and lead thou the just aright: for thou searchest the hearts and the reins, O righteous God.

11 My shield is upon God, who preserveth those that are right in heart.

12 God is the judger of the just, and of the despiser of God daily.

10 *Let the malice.*] First of all he prayeth God to bridle the malice of his enemies and to bring it to an end. Whence it follows, that his daily affliction was of no short continuance. To others it seems rather to be a terrible imprecation, who take the word גמר transitively, to destroy, or consume. And so, according to them, David wishes that God should turn upon the heads of the ungodly, the mischief that they had devised. But to me it seems more simple, that David should desire an end of his own troubles. And therefore, immediately upon his request, in the end thereof follows, that God should *lead the just aright*, or *establish him*. For there is small difference which of the two ways you read it; for the meaning is, that God should set up again and maintain the just persons that are wrongfully oppressed. *For thou art the searcher of hearts.* The copulative in this place is not unaptly resolved into the part of speech that renders a cause. For there is no doubt but that David adds a reason to confirm his prayer withal. And although he declare now the third time, that he approaches boldly upon trust of the witness of a good conscience; yet notwithstanding he expresses more than he had done before; namely, that he had not only continued innocent in outward works, but also had followed after pureness even with the inward affection of his heart. And he seems to match this his trust against the pride of his enemies, by whom it is likely that such mists of slanders were spread abroad among the common people, that they compelled the afflicted man to offer his heart and his reins for trial unto God; and it may be that he dissipates their colourable pretences with which they were contented to impose upon men, for he shews that though they received the applause of the multitude, yet was it of no value, because they should presently come before God's judgment-seat, where inquisition shall be made, not of titles or of the outward glittering of works, but of the soundness of the heart.

11 *My shield.*] It is no marvel that David from time to time among his prayers mingles meditations wherewith to encourage himself to boldness. For go we to God with ever so good a cheer, our ardour either gives way at

once, or begin to languish, unless it gather new strength. Therefore, that David might hold out with his prayers in one uniform course, he calls to mind sentences out of the general doctrine of godliness, wherewith he cherishes and cheers up his faith. And he affirms, that forasmuch as God preserveth those that be right in heart, he is sufficiently fenced with his protection. Whence it follows, that he had a good conscience. And whereas he says, not simply *the righteous*, but such as are *right in heart*, he seems to have an eye to that inward searching of the heart and reins.

12 *God is the judger.*] Others read, *God is a righteous judge*, and *God is angry every day.* Although the words will bear this meaning also, yet, because there is more plentiful doctrine in the former, I have willingly followed the same, as I see it allowed of all the best learned; and besides that, it agrees better with the present case. For inasmuch as Saul, and such as he was, had obtained so much by their slanderous reports, that all the people, wellnigh, condemned David; the godly man sustains himself with this only hope, that although things be never so confused in this world, yet God putteth a difference between the righteous and the wicked; therefore he appeals from the perverted judgments of men unto God, who can never be beguiled. Notwithstanding, it is demanded how he may attribute daily judgment unto God, whom we see frequently delay punishment a long time; and certainly the scripture, not without cause, commends his long sufferance. Now, although he do not execute his judgments forthwith, yet, forasmuch as there is no time, or rather there passes no day, wherein he sheweth not by assured proofs, that he discerneth the things which are mingled together in the world, it remains an established truth that he never ceaseth from his office; for whosoever shall lift up his eyes to consider the government of the world, shall clearly see that God's sufferance is widely different from connivance. Surely the faithful will resort to him unfearfully from day to day.

13 Unless he turn, he hath whetted his sword; he hath bent his bow, and is ready to shoot.

14 And he hath prepared the tools of death to it; he shall make fit his arrows for them that persecute.

15 Behold, he shall travail with wickedness; he conceived iniquity, and he shall bring forth leasing.

13 *Unless he turn.*] These three verses are wont to be expounded two ways. For some think that if David's

enemies proceed in their maliciousness, there is denounced against them the vengeance which their wilfulness deserves. So in the second member they supply the sentence with *the name of God*, as if it had been said, If mine enemy amend not, he shall one day feel that God is fully armed with his weapons to maintain the welfare of the righteous. If you take it in thiswise, the third verse will be a rendering of the cause, for that the ungodly, when they conceive mischief, travail of wickedness, and bring forth deceits, do directly assail God, and openly challenge him to the combat. But more correctly, in my judgment, others read these two verses in one continued sentence, although not even they satisfy me in expressing the mind of David; for I doubt not but that David, in reporting the horrible attempts of his enemies, is further illustrating God's grace by this description; for when they furiously ran upon him, furnished with strong hosts and equipment of arms, in full purpose to destroy him, who would not have said, that he had been past recovery. But there is herein a sort of irony, when he pretends fear of death at their hands; for it is as much as if he had said, Unless mine enemy alter his purpose, or turn his rage and force another way, who shall prevent my perishing under his hand? For seeing he has weapon at will, he seeks to compass my death by all means. And he properly marks out Saul; and therefore says, he has made fit his arrows for persecutors, because he had many satellites at hand that would gladly have employed their labour to destroy David; therefore the prophet's purpose was to extol the greatness of God's grace by the magnitude of the peril. *Turning* in this place is not taken for amendment, but only for an alteration of will; as if he had said, it was in his enemy's choice to perform whatsoever his lust had suggested; whence it is the more apparent how wonderful the alteration was which suddenly ensued contrary to all hope; whereas he says that Saul had prepared tools of death to his bow, he signifies that he purposed no mean thing, but that he was fully bent to wound him to death whom he shot at. Some translate this word דולקים, *Burners*, for such is its signification among the Hebrews; but that which I have translated it agrees better with the present place. And David complains that he stood in fear, not of one man only, but of a great multitude, because Saul had armed many persecutors against the miserable and fugitive man.

15 *Behold he shall travail.*] Hitherto David has declared what dreadful danger was at hand; and now, jesting at the proud practices of Saul with his glorious furniture, he declares that they are come to nought. By the demon-

strative adverb, he amplifies the miracle, as in a thing unlooked for. *Behold*, says he, *when he shall have travailed of wickedness, like as he had conceived trouble, at length there came forth empty wind and vanity, because God hath disappointed his wicked purposes.* Wickedness and trouble are taken for any manner of wrongs which Saul thought to have done to David. Now although some interpreters think that the order of the words is transposed, because *travailing* is put before *conceiving;* yet I suppose that the degrees were fitly placed, provided you resolve it thus: Behold he shall travail of wickedness, because he hath conceived trouble: that is to say, like as erst he devised mischief in himself against me, so will he endeavour to work it upon me. Afterwards he adds, that he hath brought forth *leasing*, because he had been beguiled of his hope; according, as Isaiah says, *that the unbelievers bring forth wind*, when the success is not answerable to their bold attempt. As oft, therefore, as we see the ungodly brewing devices to destroy us, let it come to our remembrance, that they do but lie to themselves. Notwithstanding we must patiently abide it, if their defeat appear not until the bringing forth.

16 He hath cut a pit and digged it out; and he is fallen into the ditch which he hath made.

17 His naughtiness shall turn upon his own head, and his violence shall light upon his own pate.

Here David says that their wicked practices not only wanted success, but also were, by God's wonderful providence turned to a contrary end. This he declares first in a metaphor, using the similitude of a pit and a ditch; and afterwards he utters the same thing in simple words without figure, namely, that the wickedness returned upon the deviser's head. I doubt not but it was a proverbial manner of speaking among the Hebrews, to say, that whoso diggeth a pit falleth into it himself, when they would signify that deceitful folks are caught in their own wiles and crafts, or devisers of mischief perish through their own devices. And this doctrine serves unto two uses. For how cunning or mighty soever our enemies be in any mischievous crafts, this end, which God promiseth, is to be hoped for, that they shall strike themselves through with their own swords. And this happens not by casualty; but God, by the secret direction of his hand, beateth back upon their own heads the mischief which they intend against the innocent. Again, if at any time the lust of the flesh stirs us either to hurt our

neighbours, or to do any wicked deed, let us bethink us of this vengeance of God, that they who prepare a pit for others are cast down into it themselves. So shall it come to pass, that according as each person regards himself and his own welfare, so will he restrain himself from all wrongful dealing.

18 I will praise the Lord according to his righteousness; and I will sing to the name of the Lord most high.

Forasmuch as God delivereth his servants to this end, that they should render unto him in return the sacrifices of praise, David promises here that he will be thankful for his deliverance received; and therewithal avouches it to be the undoubted and manifest work of God, that he had escaped from death; for he could not verily and from his heart have ascribed the praise of his welfare unto God, if he had not persuaded himself in good earnest that he was saved otherwise than by man's power. Wherefore he not only promises due thankfulness to his deliverer, but also avouches compendiously what he has recited in the whole Psalm; namely, that he owes his life to the grace of God, who had not suffered Saul to take it from him. God's righteousness is in this place taken for his faithfulness, which he performeth towards his servants in saving their lives. For God keepeth not his righteousness hidden within himself, but sendeth it abroad for our benefit, while he defendeth us against all wrongful violence, delivereth us from oppression, and preserveth us in safety though we be assaulted by wicked men.

PSALM VIII.

David, reflecting upon God's fatherly bountifulness towards mankind, is not content with a simple thanksgiving, but is ravished into an admiration of it.

[*To the chief chanter upon Haggithith. A Song of David.*]

O Lord our Lord, how wonderful is thy name in all the earth, to set thy glory above the heavens!

Whether גתית signifies an instrument of music, or a kind of tune, or the beginning of some oft-used and well-known ballad, I leave it uncertain. For as for those who think the Psalm was called so because it was made in the city of Gath, they fetch their constrained exposition too far off. Of the

three former opinions it makes no great matter which a man take. The chief thing that is to be looked to, is what the Psalm contains, and whereto it tends. David indeed sets before his eyes the wonderful power and glory of God, in the whole workmanship and government of the world, but, glancing lightly at this part, he lays a stress upon the consideration of his singular goodness towards us. And assuredly although in the whole order of nature the amplest subjects of God's praise present themselves, yet because we are more moved with the things that we feel in ourselves, David, not without good cause, purposely commends God's special grace towards mankind, because it is the brightest mirror wherein we may behold his glory. Nevertheless, it is strange he should begin with an exclamation, seeing men are wont first to shew the thing itself, ere the greatness thereof is extolled. But if we bear in mind what is said in other places, namely, that God's works cannot be expressed in words, it will seem nothing strange that David should by this manner of speaking acknowledge himself unable to declare them. Therefore, inasmuch as David, weighing with himself the inestimable grace which God hath vouchsafed towards mankind, feels all his senses swallowed up or overwhelmed, he cries out that it is a matter worthy to be wondered at, because it cannot be comprehended in words. Besides this, it is not to be doubted but that the Holy Ghost, who ruled David's tongue, did in his person quicken the dulness which is common to all men, that they should not after their ordinary fashion niggardly and coldly praise the immeasurable love of God, and his innumerable benefits which they enjoy, but rather strain all their sinews to this exercise of godliness. For this acclamation, which David has used, declares that when all the ability of man's wit is strained to the utmost upon this thought, yet it comes far short of it. I take the name of God to be put here for the renowned knowledge of him; that is to wit, so far forth as he discloseth himself to us. For I like not the subtle speculations of those who think the name of God to be nothing else but God himself. For it must be referred rather to his works and influences, whereby he is known, than to his being or substance. Therefore he says, that the earth is full of God's wonderful glory, so that the renown thereof mounteth above the heavens. For in my judgment, the word תנה is rightly taken by some in *Machor*, that is to say, in the infinitive mood, for *to place*, or *to set*. For in the second member there is an amplification, as if he had said, the earth is too little to contain the glory, or the royal majesty of God. And so this word אשר will not

be a relative, but will have the force of an expletive, or expository particle.

3 Upon the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou founded strength for thine adversaries, to put to flight the enemy and avenger.

Now he enters into the matter itself, which he took upon him to treat of, namely, that God's providence, for the uttering of itself in mankind, waiteth not for years of discretion, but shineth brightly forth even from the first childhood, so far as may suffice to disprove all the ungodly, who through their heathenish contempt could find in their hearts to blot out God's name. The opinion of some that מִפִּי, *upon*, signifies כִּפִּי, *in*, is against reason, because it absurdly diminishes the vehemence which David uses. Therefore the meaning is, that God, to set out his own providence, hath no need of the great eloquence of rhetoricians, no nor so much as distinct speech, because he hath the dumb tongues of infants ready and eloquent enough to set it forth. But here it is asked, in what sense he makes children to be publishers of God's glory? In my judgment, they are poor philosophers that think this is done when children begin to speak distinctly, because that then also the understanding power of the soul appears. For admit that they are called babes even till they are seven years old, how will they imagine those to hang still upon the teat that speak now distinctly? Nor is it a whit more reasonable, that babes and sucklings should allegorically be taken for the faithful sort, who being born anew of God's Spirit, savour of nothing that is old. But to what purpose is it to wrest David's words, of which the native sense flows so aptly? He says, that babes and sucklings are patrons of sufficient ableness to avouch God's providence. Why does he not commit this charge unto men, but because he would shew, that infants' tongues, before they are able to speak one word, nevertheless utter aloud, how bountiful God is to mankind? For whence is nourishment ready for them as soon as they come out of their mothers' wombs, but because God wonderfully changeth blood into milk? From whence also have they the skill to suck, but that the same God by his secret instinct maketh their tongues apt to do it? Therefore has David very good reason to avouch, that although the tongues of all that be men grown should cease, yet the speechless mouth of infants is able enough to set forth God's praise. But when he not only brings in babes as witnesses and publishers of God's glory, but also

attributes mature strength unto their mouth, it is not without great force. For it is as much as if he had said that God's soldiers are invincible, and shall easily disperse and overthrow the whole host of the ungodly when it comes to the encounter. For we must mark against whom he gives infants the charge to defend God's glory, namely, against the iron-hearted despisers of God; who, after the manner of the Giants, scruple not to proclaim war against heaven. Therefore, inasmuch as these Cyclopses with furious headiness pull down and overthrow whatsoever godliness is in the world, and endeavour with their hardihood to break open even heaven itself, David, in mockery of them, brings children's mouths forth to battle against them, saying that they are furnished with armour strong enough, and endued with sufficient manliness, to overthrow their pride. And therefore he adds immediately, *for thine adversaries.* For God needeth not to make war with strong puissance to vanquish the faithful, who of their own accord hearken to his voice, and yield forward obedience as soon as he doth but hold up his finger. I confess, indeed, that God's prodence shineth forth chiefly for the faithful's sake, because they only have eyes to behold it; but, forasmuch as they yield themselves willing to learn, God teacheth them in a gentle manner. But he armeth himself against his enemies who never yield without compulsion. Some take the word *founded* too restrictedly, namely, that God layeth foundations for his own glory in the very birth or begetting of man. Surely, I doubt not but it is put for *to establish,* as if the prophet had said, That the mouths of children were as good unto God to destroy his enemies with, as warlike and strong hosts of men. *To put to flight.* The interpreters vary concerning the word השבית. Properly it signifies to cause one to cease, or leave off; for it is in the conjugation *Hiphil,* of the neuter שבת, which signifies to cease, or leave off; but, by a metaphor, it is often taken to destroy, or bring to nought, because destruction makes an end of things. Others translate it *that thou mayest repress* or *bridle,* as though David meant that they were put to silence, so that they ceased to rail or clamour any more; but because there is here an allusion full of grace to a hostile encounter, as I have just now explained, I preferred the military term *to put to flight.* But it is demanded, after what sort God putteth his enemies to flight, seeing their sacrilegious frowardness ceases not to rush violently against all the examples of God's providence: I answer, they are not put to flight as in respect that they are compelled unto modesty, but because they lie shamefully confounded

together with their blasphemies and currish barkings. The effect is this; That from man's first begetting, or being born, the brightness of God's providence is so apparent, that even the infants hanging on their mothers' teats do overthrow their fury; because that though they would a hundred times burst themselves for it, yet they do but strive in vain to vanquish the strength which shews itself in that weakness. And although there reign a desire of revenge in all the unbelievers, like as contrariwise God ruleth his children with the spirit of meekness, yet, notwithstanding, according to the circumstances of the present place, the prophet attributes this title to the despisers of God, who not only are cruel against men, but also burn with brainsick madness to assault even God himself. As regards the explanation of the prophet's meaning, I have now discharged the duty of a faithful interpreter. There remains but one scruple, because Christ, Matth. xxi. 16. seemeth to draw this text to another sense, when he applieth the same to children of ten years of age. But the solution is easy, that Christ reasoneth from the greater thing to the lesser, as thus: It was not against reason at all that God, who had made children even in their infancy to be the maintainers of his glory, should set forth his praise by their tongues after they were come to seven years age or upwards.

4 When I see thy heavens, the works of thy fingers; the moon and the stars, which thou hast trimmed;

5 What is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?

Forasmuch as the particle כי among the Hebrews, often imports the same as *quia* in Latin, which signifies *because* in English, and does but simply affirm a thing, the Greeks and the ancient Latins have commonly read the fourth verse severally by itself, as if it were a perfect sentence. But doubtless it is connected with the verse following. And therefore the two verses must needs be put together. Notwithstanding, the said Hebrew word כי might also be expounded adversatively for *although*, in this sense: Although the incomparable majesty of God shine forth in the heavenly frame, and worthily fix men's eyes in looking upon it; yet is his glory beheld after a peculiar manner in that bountiful favour wherewith he embraceth mankind. And this sense would not be incongruous. Nevertheless I liked better to follow that which was most received. However, it behoves the readers to be heedful in marking the purpose of the prophet; namely, that by this comparison he magnifies the

wonderful goodness of God; because it is a wonder that the creator of heaven, whose high glory carrieth us upward to the admiration of him, descends so low, as to vouchsafe to take upon him the care of mankind. And this antithesis is gathered from the word אנוש, because he terms man by his frailty, rather than by his strength. For we see that miserable men, creeping upon the earth, are intermixed with the vilest creatures. Worthily therefore might God despise them, and make no account of them if he stood upon the regard of worthiness. Wherefore the prophet abases their estate by interrogation, meaning that God's wonderful goodness is seen more clearly hereby, that so great a workmaster, whose majesty shineth in heaven, will vouchsafe to deck this miserable and vile creature with singular glory, and to enrich it with innumerable treasures. For if he had listed to bestow his liberality, he needed not to have chosen men out of dust and clay to prefer them above all other creatures: for there was matter enough for him to work upon in heaven. Therefore whosoever is not amazed at this miracle, he is more than unthankful and stubborn. With this view also he terms the heavens, God's heavens, and the works of his fingers. For what should move him to come out of that so noble and excellent part of his work, and to let down himself unto us bits of worms; but to make his goodness the more manifest? Whence we gather also, that they too fondly abuse God's grace, who take occasion to be proud by reason of their own excellence. As though indeed, they had either acquired it by their own cunning, or possessed it for their own desert; and their own beginning should not rather put them in mind how it is bestowed upon such as otherwise are vile and utterly unworthy. Therefore, whatsoever of glory we see in ourselves, let it stir up our senses to magnify the free favour of God. In the end of the fourth verse, instead of that which others translate *to prepare,* or *to found,* or *to establish,* it seemed good to me to translate it *to trim;* for the prophet seems to have an eye unto that most goodly order by which God hath so aptly distinguished the placing of the stars, and governeth their course. That God is mindful of man, imports as much as to embrace man with fatherly love, and to defend and cherish him under his protection. Forasmuch as almost all interpreters take פקד for *to visit,* I would not differ from them, as the sense agrees very well with it. Yet as it signifies, now and then, *to remember,* and that the repetition of one sentence in different words often occurs in the Psalms, it will not be amiss to translate it as if he had said, this is a wondrous thing, that God thinketh upon men continually.

6 For thou hast made him little inferior to God, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

7 Thou hast set him over the works of thine hands: Thou hast put all things under his feet.

6 *For thou hast.*] I doubt not but that the Hebrew copulative כי ought to have been turned into the causal adverb, as though it had been written, *for surely*. For he confirms that which he spake recently of the incomparable goodness of God towards men, namely, that he sheweth himself near unto them and mindful of them. And first, he says, they are decked with so many ornaments that their estate is not much inferior to the heavenly glory of God. Secondly, he rehearses their outward sovereignty and authority over all creatures; by which it appears, to how high a degree of dignity God hath exalted them. For my part I doubt not but he commends the notable gifts which shew how men are shaped after the image of God, and created to the hope of blessed and everlasting life: for in that they are endued with reason whereby they may discern good and evil asunder; in that the seed of religion is sown in them; in that there is between them a mutual communion knit together with certain holy bonds; in that there grows among them a regard of honesty, and a sense of shame, and governance of laws; these are no obscure tokens of most excellent and heavenly wisdom. And therefore, not without cause, David exclaims that mankind is decked with glory and honour. For to be *crowned* is metaphorically taken here as though he had said, he is clad and beautified with robes of honour, not much differing from the brightness of God. Nor do I dislike the Greek translation of אלהים, into angels, as we know that angels are often so called; and I take the words of David to import as much as if he had said, that men are little distant from the heavenly state of God. Yet, as the other rendering is more natural, and the Hebrews for the most part subscribe to it, I have followed it. And it is no hindrance to it that Paul, Heb. ii. 7. has written *than the angels*, and not *than God:* for we know that the apostles took great license in citing scripture; surely not to wrest them to a wrong sense, but because it was enough for them to shew with the finger that the things which they taught is ratified by God's word. And therefore they never scrupled to change the words, so that they preserved the matter. There is more difficulty in untying another knot. For whereas the prophet in this place treats of the excellency of men, and says that they

approach near unto God, the apostle applies it to the humiliation of Christ. First, we must see how it may stand, that what is spoken of all mankind, should be fitly applied to the person of Christ. And secondly, how it may be construed, that Christ was humiliated in his death, when without fashion and beauty he lay as it were defaced under the slander and curse of the cross. Although for the solution of the first question, that might suffice which some men say, that there may be a fit and suitable transference from the members to the head, yet I will nevertheless proceed further, because Christ is not only the first-begotten of all creatures, but also the restorer of all mankind. For the things that David cites here, belong properly to the first beginning of the creation, when man's nature was whole and sound; moreover we know that by the fall of Adam all mankind fell from their original nature, because both the image of God was almost utterly effaced, and we were divested of the chief gifts, which would have made us as it were demigods. And finally, we were brought from most high excellency, to sorrowful and loathsome destitution. Through such corruption ceased that liberality of God which David commends in this place, so at least that it in nowise appear in its pure brightness. For although it be not utterly effaced, yet how small a portion of it there is to be seen amidst the miserable ruins thereof; but, forasmuch as the heavenly father hath again bestowed the fulness of all gifts upon his Son, that all of us should draw out of this well-spring: whatsoever God bestoweth upon us by him, the same of right belongs in the first degree to him; yea, rather, he is the lively image of God, according to which we must be amended; upon which all the other things depend. If any man make exception, that David first demanded, what is man, that God hath so bounteously poured out his favour upon a creature so despicable and worthless; and that there is no cause why he should wonder at Christ, who is not one of the common sort of men, but the only-begotten Son of God; the solution is easy: namely, that that which was bestowed upon Christ's manhood came to him of free gift: yea, and that it is a most refulgent mirror of God's mercy, that a mortal man and the son of Adam, is the only Son of God, and the Lord of Glory, and the Head of the Angels. And at the same time it is to be remarked, that what gifts soever he receiveth, the same are counted so much the more of free gift, because they pertain more unto us. Therefore his excellence and heavenly dignity are extended unto us also, for whose sakes he is enriched with them. That which the apostle discourses after this, concerning his short abasing,

is not set down by way of exposition, but by way of enriching the text, he turns to his own purpose that which was spoken in another sense. For Paul scrupled not, Rom. x. 6. to garnish the words of Moses by an amplification, where he says: *Who shall climb into heaven*, &c. Deut. x. 12. Therefore the apostle had not only an eye to what David meant; but, alluding to the terms of *abasement* and *honour*, he placed the one in Christ's death, and the other in his resurrection. To the same purpose almost makes that exposition of Paul's, Ephes. iv. 8; by which he not so much expounds the place of Ps. lxviii. 18. as applies it to Christ's person by a godly deflexion of it.

7 *Thou hast set him over.*] He now descends to that second head which I have just touched upon; namely, That hereby it is manifest, with what great love God hath embraced mankind, and what store he setteth by them, seeing he hath given them dominion over all things. For whereas he hath no need of anything himself, he hath appointed all the riches of heaven and earth for them. What a rare and incomparable honour, that a mortal man should in God's stead bear lordship in the world, as it were, in his own right! and that whithersoever he turn his eyes, he should see no want anything that might conduce to a happy life. Again; as this text is cited in 1 Cor. xv. 27. where discourse is made of Christ's spiritual kingdom; if any man suppose it to be far removed from this sense, the answer is ready; namely, that it is a general rule, that the whole world is framed in such order, that it may serve to man's felicity. And how the same may properly agree with Christ alone, I have already just shewn. It now remains further to be seen, how far this putting all things under them extend. Undoubtedly if anything be against men, either in heaven or on earth, then is that perfection of subordination confounded. Whence it follows, that after mankind was defaced by Adam's falling away, they were not only bereft of this most godly and honourable state, and dispossessed of their former lordship, but also are held captive under most foul and shameful bondage. And although Christ be the lawful heir both of heaven and earth, by whom the faithful recover that which was taken from them in Adam, still he hath not as yet got the full possession of his dominion. Whence the apostle concludes that this shall not be thoroughly accomplished, until death be abolished. He therefore reasons thus: If all things be subdued unto Christ, nothing ought to stand against his members. But we see that death reigns like a tyrant over them. Therefore it follows, that there remains a hope of a better state. And this flows from that

principle which I have spoken of; namely, that by nature the world was created to this end, that all the parts thereof should aim at man's welfare, as at their mark. So in another place he proves, that we must all be made to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ at the last day, because it is written, *Unto me shall all knees bow.* For the minor proposition is to be understood; namely, that many as yet proudly and stubbornly shake off his yoke, and in nowise will be brought to bow the knee.

8 All sheep and oxen, and also the cattle of the fields;

9 The fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea, and that which walketh through the paths of the seas.

10 O Lord our Lord, how wonderful is thy name in all the earth!

The last question seems not yet thoroughly resolved; for if the prophet, in the way of exposition, declares here how God hath subdued all things unto us, such subduing is restrained to the present advantage of this earthly life. I answer, that the prophet does not here comprehend all the things of which he had spoken, but alleges an example, only in one part or particular; yea, and he hath chosen above all, that part which is evident enough, even to the homely and gross sort of men. For there is no man so dull and slowwitted, but if he will open his eyes, he may see it is by the wonderful providence of God that horses and oxen yield their service to men; that sheep bear wool to clothe them with; and that all kind of cattle yield even their flesh to feed them. The more visible the proof of this dominion is, the more it becomes us to be touched with the sense of God's grace, as often as we either eat meat, or enjoy any other comforts. Therefore, David's meaning is, not simply that man is made lord of all God's works, because he may clothe himself with wool and skins; because he may feed upon the flesh of beasts; and because he applies their labour to his own convenience; but by this evident instance he demonstrates that lordship or sovereignty with which God has adorned him. The sum of it amounts to this; God, in creating man, gave an earnest of his immeasurable grace, and more than fatherly love towards him, which ought in reason to make us all amazed. And although by man's falling away, their estate is now almost gone to wreck, yet there remain still certain traces of that bounteousness of God, which may suffice to beget admiration in us. But because in this sad overthrow that regular subordination of

nature shine not forth any more, yet the faithful, whom God gathereth to himself under Christ their Head, do, after such sort, in part enjoy the remnants of the good things whereof they were despoiled in Adam, that there is supplied to them great matter of wonderment, in that they are so gently treated at his hand. Now, then, although David linger in the temporal benefits of God, yet is it our duty to proceed to higher things, and to think upon the inestimable treasures of his heavenly kingdom, which he hath unfolded in Christ, and whatsoever gifts belong to the spiritual life; that the consideration thereof may kindle our hearts to the following after godliness, and not suffer us to become slothful in celebrating his praises.

PSALM IX.

After that David has reckoned up the former victories which he had gained, and mightily exalted God's grace and power for his success; he now afresh, at the rising up of new enemies and dangers, calls for the help of the same God, whom he had found heretofore to be his deliverer, and prays that their pride may be overthrown.

[*To the chief chanter, Almuth Laben. A Song of David.*]

This title is variously explained. Some translate it *Upon the death of Laben,* and their opinion is, that he was one of the chief captains of his enemies. Others think it to be rather some feigned name, and are of opinion, that Goliath is meant in this Psalm; while others believe that it was an instrument of music. But unto me it seems more probable, or at least, as in an obscure matter, more likely, that it was the beginning of some well-known ballad, to the tune whereof this Psalm was set. And whereas the interpreters make a question what victory it could be that David sets out here, in my judgment it is absurd. First, as to their opinion, that it is a song of victory, wherein David simply yields thanks unto God, the very context refutes their error. For although the greater part is employed in singing the praises of God, yet must it all be referred unto praying; for that he may raise up his mind to trust in God, he, according to his wont, calls to mind by what signal display of God's power he had heretofore been delivered from the violence and the hand of his enemies. Wherefore it is a mistake to restrain to one victory this thanksgiving, in which he intends to comprehend many deliverances.

2 I will praise the Lord with my whole heart; I will tell out all thy wondrous works.

3 I will be glad and rejoice in thee; yea, I will make my songs of thy name, O thou most Highest.

4 While mine enemies are turned back, fall down, and are chased at thy presence.

2 *I will praise.*] He makes this preface to win God to succour him in his present distresses. For as God continueth his favour without ceasing towards the faithful, whatsoever he hath erst bestowed upon us, must cherish our hope for the time to come. There is, indeed, in these words, a profession of thanksgiving; still, however, with this mindfulness David also encourages himself to hope well, and by means thereof opens the gate of his prayer. The *whole heart* is taken for a sound or uncorrupted heart, who is opposed to a double heart. And so he not only puts a difference between himself and the gross hypocrites, who praise God but with their lips outwardly, without any inward affection; but also acknowledges, that whatsoever praiseworthy thing he has done heretofore, the same proceeded wholly from God's mere grace. For although even the heathenish sort, when they have obtained any notable victory, are ashamed to defraud God of his praise; yet we see that as soon as they have with one word acknowledged that God helped them, forthwith fall to fond bragging, and of singing of triumphs to themselves, as though they were nought beholden unto God. In short, they only jest when they dignify their doings with the name of God, because that, in thus making an offering unto God, they do but sacrifice to their own devices, policy, courage, and strength; for the common ambition of them all is shrewdly reproved under the person of one proud king by the prophet Habakkuk, i. 16. Nay, we see how those ancient and famous captains, when they sought to have solemn supplications decreed in their names, regarded nothing less than the honour of their false gods; but only abused them as a deceitful title to vaunt themselves. Therefore David, with good reason, affirms himself to be unlike the children of this world, whose cheat is detected by that dishonest distribution, while they draw to themselves the greater part of that praise which they pretended to attribute to God. For, surely, it is no praising of God with the whole heart, if a mortal man sips never so small a portion of it, as that which he claims for himself. So far from being endurable is the sacrilegious arrogance of those

who, by vaunting themselves, deface his glory as much as in them lie. *I will tell out all thy marvellous works.* In this member he confirms what I have already said; namely, that he makes not mention of some one victory or deliverance only; for David sets before himself all the miracles that God had wrought for his sake in general, that he may think upon them. And he terms miracles, not every manner of benefit which God had bestowed upon him, but his more signal and memorable deliverances, wherein there shone a token of his heavenly power. For although the Lord will be acknowledged the author of all good things, yet in some of his gifts he hath engraven more evident marks that better awaken our senses, which otherwise are drowsy. Therefore it is, as if David should acknowledge that he was not preserved of God by some ordinary means, but that the special power of God was conspicuous in the case; forasmuch as he had wonderfully advanced his hand above the ordinary and accustomed degree.

3 *I will be glad and rejoice.*] Behold how the faithful praise God sincerely and without false colouring; namely, when they lean not to themselves, nor are drunken with the foolish presumption of the flesh, but rejoice in God only, which is nothing else than to seek matter of gladness out of his mere grace, because that alone comprises all happiness. For we must bear in mind the opposition between the joy that men pick out of themselves, and the joy that they seek in God. And that David may the better express how he leaves nothing to himself that may withhold him, or occupy him in vain delight, he adds the word rejoice, whereby he means, that the full abundance of his joy consists wholly in God, so as that not even the least drop thereof is to be sought elsewhere. Moreover, it is requisite to call to remembrance that which I touched on before; namely, that David sets before himself the former experiences of God's grace, in order that he may the more cheerfully direct his prayers unto him. For he that in the entrance of his prayer affirms himself to have good matter of rejoicing in God, fences himself beforehand with right good assurance.

4 *While mine enemies are turned back.*] In these words he explains the cause why he takes upon him to sing the praises of God; namely, for that he acknowledges himself to have gotten victory so oftentimes, not by his own power, or by his men of war, but by the free favour of God. In the former member he shews historically, that his enemies were overthrown or compelled to flee. And afterwards, from the sense of faith, he adds that this came to pass, not by man's power or by chance, but because God stood against them in

the battle. Wisely therefore did David lift up the eyes of his mind to God, when he saw his enemies turning back, that he might perceive that victory flowed not to him from any other but God's secret help. And doubtless it is he only that guideth the simple with the spirit of wisdom; and again, confoundeth the wits of the crafty, and striketh them with amazement; that breatheth courage into the faint and fearful, and striketh even the stoutest with alarm; that furnisheth the weak with new strength, and weakeneth them that be strong; who upholdeth the feeble with his arm, and maketh the sword to fall out of the hand of the warlike; and, finally, that giveth a prosperous or disastrous turn to the battle, whichever way he pleaseth. Therefore, as often as we see our enemies overthrown, we must beware that our perception of it halt not in this sight, as heathen men which see not when they behold with open eyes; but we must learn that the things which are driven back, are put to flight by the presence of the Lord. I have translated the words of the future tense, in the present tense, because David sets again before his eyes the favour of God, which was shewn him before.

5 For thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou art set upon the throne a righteous judge.

6 Thou hast rebuked nations, thou hast put the ungodly to flight; thou hast wiped out their name for ever and ever.

He proceeds a point further in this verse; that God lent him his helping hand, because he was afflicted wrongfully. And surely, we must take heed that we fight under God's standard, if we wish to have his help. Therefore he calls him a judge of righteousness, or a righteous judge, which is the same; as if he should say, God had dealt according to his wont, and according to his undeviating method, since he is accustomed to take upon him the defence of good causes. I chose to translate the epithet *righteous*, in the nominative case, because in so doing the expression is more emphatic; as if he had said, that God had at length taken upon him the character of a judge, and was gone up to the bench to execute the office of a judge. And therefore he boasts that law and right stood on his side, saying, that God had been the maintainer of his right and of his cause. Whereunto pertains that also which follows in the next verse; namely, that the ungodly was put to flight. For when he sees his enemies overthrown, he does not simply re-

joice at their destruction, but, condemning them of unrighteousness, he says, they have suffered the punishment which they deserved. By the word *nations* he means that not only a few ungodly persons were destroyed, but mighty hosts, yea, and hosts that rose against him divers ways. And hereby God's goodness shines forth the better, that for the favour which he bare to one servant of his, he spared not even whole nations. When he says, that their remembrance was wiped out for ever, understand it thus; that they were cut off, and appointed to everlasting shame, without hope of rising again; for otherwise it could not be discerned after what sort God burieth the name of the ungodly with them, were it not that he avows, that the memorial of the righteous shall abide always in blessedness. Prov. x. 6, 7.

7 O thou enemy, wastings are come to an end for ever, and thou hast destroyed cities; and the memorial of the parties is perished with them.

8 And the Lord sitteth evermore, he hath prepared his seat unto judgment.

9 And he shall judge the world in righteousness; he shall judge the nations aright.

7 *O thou enemy.*] This seventh verse is explained sundry ways. For some take the letter ה for a mark of interrogation, as though David speaking to his enemies, should ask them, whether they had fulfilled their lust in wasting and destroying, according to their intent. For the word תמם signifies sometimes to fulfil, or accomplish, and sometimes to make an end of a thing. And so should David in the way of irony rebuke the foolish presumption of his enemies. Others, without any interrogation, make the irony more open, and think that there is a double state described, because David in the first part brings in his enemies assailing him with savage violence, and wilfully proceeding in their cruelty, in such a manner that they seem to purpose nothing but the utter destruction of David's kingdom; and afterwards, in the second part, sets God full against them, sitting in his throne to repress those furious practices. If this sense seem good, the copulative ו must be resolved into the adversative particle as follows: Thou, O enemy, didst mind nothing but slaughter and destroying of cities; but God hath at length shewn himself to sit in heaven as a judge, who sets in order the things that are in confusion upon the earth. To others it seems, that David yields thanks to God, because when the wicked were fully bent to make havoc of all

things, he made an end of their outrages. Others more restrictedly interpret it, that the outrages of the ungodly were come to their fulness, because God in just vengeance turned upon their own heads the things that they had devised against David. Others suppose that David first complains that God for a long while passed over with silence the miserable dispersing of his people, whereby it came to pass, that the ungodly made havoc of all things at their pleasure in spite of all, and afterwards adds by way of consolation, that God, in spite of all, is the ruler of all worldly matters. I dislike not that it should first be described in the manner of irony, how dreadful the puissance of the enemy was at the first brunt; and that afterwards there should be set against it, God's judgment, which suddenly brake off their proceedings contrary to their hope. For we know that the ungodly, although they do not openly disannul God's government, yet run headlong to all unbridled mischief as boldly as if God were bound in fetters. We noted the like form of speech in Ps. vii. 13. And this contrast of help sent from God, very well shews forth the miracle; namely, that neither the ungodly purposed any stay to themselves in doing mischief, save in the utter destruction of all things, and it seemed at the first that all would go to wreck; but that God rescued in due season, when things were so confounded. Therefore, as often as nothing appears but destruction, let us remember to lift up our eyes to the heavenly throne, whence God beholds all human affairs. For it behoves us to drive back all assaults of temptations with this buckler, that though we are brought to utter despair in the world, yet God nevertheless sitteth judge in heaven. Or rather, when he maketh as though he will not see it, and remedieth not our harms out of hand, it behoves us to take hold of his secret providence with the hand of faith. First, he says, that God sitteth evermore, whereby he means, that how high soever men's violence advance itself, and however outrageously their fury burst forth, yet can they never pull God out of his seat, neither can it come to pass that he should put from himself the office and authority of a judge. Which thing he utters more plainly in the second part, where he says, that he reigneth, not only to sit on high in majesty and glory, but also to govern the world by righteousness.

9 *And he shall judge.*] David having just testified, that God is not endued with an idle power, to give himself to pleasures, but executeth his authority in governing the world justly and uprightly, now adds the use of this doctrine; namely, that God's works are not shut up in heaven, but displayed to the behoof of men. And this is true the-

ology, not to imagine God to give himself over to repose or pleasure, and to be such a one as, wrapped up in himself, neglecteth mankind, as Epicurus surmises, but to place him in the throne of power and equity, so that we assure ourselves, that although he do not at once succour such as are wrongfully oppressed, yet he never casteth off the care of them. And surely, we must thus believe, that when he winketh at things, he forsaketh not his charge, but exerciseth the patience of his people, and therefore that we must await the issue with tranquil minds. The demonstrative pronoun, in my opinion, has weight; as though he should say, This cannot be taken from God, that he must judge the world, and extend his judgments unto all nations. Whence it follows, that he will much more be the judge of those that are his own. And David assures us, that these judgments are righteous, to the intent that when we are wrongfully and cruelly troubled, we should crave help at his hand with assured hope, because, seeing that he judgeth nations according to right, he will neither suffer wrongful outrages to reign always without restraint, nor disappoint the guiltless of his help.

10 And the Lord will be a defence to the poor, and a refuge in the season of trouble.

11 And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee, because thou failest not them that seek thee, O Lord.

12 Sing unto the Lord the dweller in Sion, shew forth his doings among the people.

13 For in making inquisition for blood, he remembered it, he forgot not the cry of the poor.

10 *And the Lord will be.*] He furnishes a remedy against a temptation, which smites the weak sorely, when they see themselves, and such as they, abandoned to the lust of the ungodly, while God keeps silence. For he admonishes them that God delayeth his help, and, to outward appearance, forsaketh his faithful, that he may succour such as are distressed and afflicted in more convenient time. Whence it follows, that he in nowise relaxeth in his duty, if at any time he suffer good and guiltless men to be brought to poverty, or if he exercise them with weeping and moaning; for by this means he kindleth a light for them, that they may see his judgments the better. And therefore David expressly says, how he bringeth forth his help in due season, even in the very trouble itself. Whereby we are taught, to allow

time to his providence, that at length it may shew itself in the season of need. Wherefore, if nothing be better for us, than to be shielded with God's hand, and to feel his fatherly favour, let it not be such a trouble to us to be counted poor and miserable in the sight of the world; but let us assuage our sorrow with this comfort, that God is not far off, whom our adversities allure to help us. To some, the word בצרה seems to be a simple word, which in Hebrew signifies a forbidding, and in this place they take it metaphorically for distress, when a man is brought to a strait, and finds no way to get out. But the opinion of those is more likely, who say that the letter ב is but a servile letter. Therefore God is said to be ready at all times, namely, when affliction oppresses the godly. In the eleventh verse he teaches that this fruit ensues; namely, that as often as the Lord delivereth the righteous, both they and all others like them, do profit more and more in trusting to his grace. For unless we are fully persuaded, that God hath a care of men's affairs, we must needs be vexed with continual unquietness. But as most men are blind to God's judgments, David restraineth this profiting only to the faithful. And certainly, where there is no godliness, there is no sense of God's works. Again; it is to be noted that he attributes the knowledge of God unto the faithful, because that hence springeth religion, which is quenched through men's ignorance and dulness. Moreover, although many take the name of God simply for God himself, yet, as I have said elsewhere, I think something further is here signified. For, as his Being is hidden and incomprehensible, so far as he discloseth himself unto us, his majesty is placed in his name. Afterwards he declares the ground of his hope to be, that God never forsaketh those that seek him. And this is done in two ways; either by invocation and prayer, or by endeavour to live holily and uprightly, which two things go always together; but seeing he entreats here of God's protection, wherein consisteth the welfare of the godly, I take it that to seek God is to flee to him for refuge.

12 *Sing unto the Lord.*] David, not content to have yielded thanks himself alone, exhorts the faithful to unite in praising God; not only because they ought to stir up others to this duty of godliness, but also because the deliverances of which he makes mention were worthy of open and solemn commendation, as is expressed more clearly in the second member, where he desires them to be published among the nations. For the meaning is, that he is not magnified according to his worthiness, unless they fill the whole world with his commendation. Now, although this was, as it were,

to sing to them that were deaf, yet, by this manner of speaking, David meant to declare that the borders of Jewry were too narrow to contain the immeasurable extent of God's praises. He terms God the *dweller in Sion*, to distinguish him from all the counterfeit idols of the heathen. For there is a tacit comparison between that God, that made the covenant with Abraham and Israel, and all the gods that were blindly worshipped by the rest of the world. For it is not enough to reverence and honour some god at a venture, but the true and only one God must have this honour attributed to himself alone. Moreover, since God had chosen that place, wherein to have his name called upon, David rightly assigns that place unto him, as his proper dwelling-place: not because it is right to confine him to bounds or space, whom the heavens of heavens cannot contain, but because he had promised that the same should be his resting-place for evermore, as we shall see hereafter. For David did not arbitrarily assign God a dwelling-place there, but he was certified by an answer from heaven, that it was God's pleasure it should be so, according as Moses had foretold. And this confirms what I have said already: namely, that this Psalm was not made upon the death of Goliath, because that by God's commandment the ark of the covenant was not removed into Sion until a little before the end of David's reign. For harsh and forced is the conjecture of some, that David, by the spirit of prophecy, spake of it as of a thing to come. Nevertheless, we see that the holy fathers, when they resorted to Sion to offer sacrifices to God, attempted nothing of their own heads, but only gave a proof of their obedience towards God by grounding themselves upon assurance of the word. Whence it follows, that it is wrong to allege their example to excuse that worship which superstitious persons have forged of their own heads. Besides this, it was not enough for the faithful in those days, to dwell upon the word of God, unless, through the help of outward signs, they had lifted up their minds unto God, and worshipped him spiritually. Surely God shewed true tokens of his presence in that visible sanctuary; but not to the intent it should bind the people's perceptions to earthly elements; but rather, his meaning was, that those outward tokens should be in the place of ladders, whereby the faithful might mount up even into heaven. For from the beginning God appointed both the sacraments and all other outward exercises of godliness, as best might suit the rude and uninformed state of his people; therefore, even at this day, the lawful use of them is this, if they help us in seeking God spiritually in his heavenly glory, but do not either occupy us

in this world, or hold us in the vanities of the flesh, of which we shall have more convenient place to treat hereafter. Now, then, like as the Lord in old time when he termed himself the dweller in Sion, meant to give substantial ground of trust, rest, and gladness to his people; even so also in these days, after that the law is come forth out of Sion, and the covenant of grace has flowed out of that fountain unto us, let us assure ourselves, that he sitteth every where in the midst of the faithful, that worship him purely and rightly according to his word.

13 *For in making.*] In this place it is written bloods, in the plural number; and therefore the relative which is subjoined, may aptly be referred to the same. But as it is an ordinary thing among the Hebrews, to transpose the order of the antecedent and the relative, some expound it of *poor folk*, after this manner: in making inquisition for blood he remembered them, that is to say, the poor, of whom he speaks afterwards. And although in respect of the sense it little matters which of these ways the passage is translated, yet the former sense flows most naturally. It is a repetition of that which he had spoken a little before; namely, that God's power is chiefly to be considered in his mercy towards his servants that are wrongfully troubled. For of God's works, which are many, he commendeth one especial kind, as chiefly worthy to be had in remembrance; namely, that he delivereth the poor from death, and that if at any time he suffer them to be troubled, yet afterwards he revengeth the wrong done unto them. Now, although the words he uses betoken a continual action, yet I doubt not but David's meaning is, that men should, even by the examples that he has rehearsed, acknowledge that God requireth innocent blood, and is mindful of the cry of his people. And he again enforces that which I have touched upon before, that God doth not always speedily redress the wrongs when we would, nor break the attempts of the ungodly at their first beginning; but rather delayeth his help, so as that our crying may seem in vain: which thing it behoves as to bear in mind, for if we measure God's help by our own understanding, our hearts shall quail from time to time, and, in the end, we shall not retain one drop of good hope. We would, as I said, that he should stretch out his hand afar of, and turn away the troubles aforehand, which he seeth prepared against us; but he maketh as though he saw it not, and suffereth the innocent blood to be shed. But let this comfort sustain us, that at the end he will shew in very deed, how precious our blood was unto him. If any man object that God's help cometh too late, after we are past

all harm; I answer, that God refraineth not any longer than it is for our benefit to be humble under the cross; and that he preferreth not vengeance to help, as though he were not at all times willing and ready to succour us; but because he knows it is not always fit time to manifest his grace. Meanwhile, this is a singular evidence, not only of his fatherly love towards us, but also of a blessed immortality; that he hath a regard even of the dead. For if his grace should always prevent us, who would not be tied to this present life; but when he revengeth our death, it shews that we remain alive before him. For he doth not, after the manner of men, keep a memorial of those whom he could not keep alive; but he proveth in very deed, that he cherisheth and keepeth in his bosom, those who, as touching the flesh, seem to be utterly undone. And this is the cause why David says that he remembereth blood when he maketh inquisition for it, because, although he deliver not his servants at the first moment from the sword of the ungodly, yet he suffereth not their murders to be unpunished. To the same end tends also the latter member, *that he forgot not their cry;* because, although he shews not in effect that he giveth ear at once to the complaint of his servants, yet at length he sheweth that he took heed of them. And mention is made expressly of crying, to the intent they should direct their wishes, groanings, and prayers, unto God, as many as desire to feel him their deliverer and avenger.

14 Have mercy upon me, O Lord; consider my affliction at the hands of them that persecute me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death.

15 That I may report all thy praises in the gates of the daughter of Sion; and that I may rejoice in thy salvation.

14. *Have mercy upon me.*] I take this to be the second part of the Psalm. To others it seems otherwise; that is to say, that David, in giving thanks, as he is often wont, also therewith shews what he had prayed for even in the very anguish of distress; and I confess that such examples occur in many places. But while I weigh all the circumstances more narrowly, I am compelled to incline to the contrary; namely, that in the beginning he magnified the graces bestowed upon him, that he might prepare the way for prayer, for the Psalm at last closes with a prayer. Therefore he does not here thrust in by the way the thoughts which he had conceived in the midst of his dangers and cares; but he purposely calls for

God's help; requesting that, as he had often felt him to be his deliverer, so he would continue the course of his grace towards him. And it may be that his enemies, already often vanquished, raising new powers, and taking courage, attempted the utmost; as we commonly see that such as are desperate, rage with more violence and headiness. This is certain; that when David prayed, there was before him exceeding great fear, for it is not for nought that he calls God to witness his affliction; and it is to be noted, that while he flees humbly to God's mercy, he bears the cross that is laid upon him, with a quiet and patient mind. But especially is to be noted the title with which he adorns God, calling him his lifter up from the gate of death, for I find no better name to express the Hebrew word מרומם, for first he confirms his faith by experience, in that he had often been delivered out of the greatest dangers; and afterwards he assures himself of safety, even in the jaws of death, because God is wont, not only to help his servants and to heal their afflictions by ordinary means, but also to lead them forth from the grave, even after all hope of life is cut off; for he terms the gates of death metaphorically, the utmost perils which threaten destruction, or rather, which lay the grave open before us. Therefore, lest either the soreness of present evils or the fear of troubles hanging over us may swallow up our faith, or break off our prayers, let us call to remembrance that this charge is not in vain ascribed unto God, that he lifts up his servants from the gates of death.

15 *That I may report.*] Although David means simply that he will set forth God's praise in all companies and whereso-ever shall be the greatest resort of people, because men were wont to make their assemblies at the gates in those days; yet it seems an allusion to the gates of death; as if he had said, that after he is delivered from the grave, he will do his utmost to publish God's grace in the full light of day. But because it is not enough for us to sound God's praises with our tongues, unless they proceed from the heart, there is added an inward gladness, as if he had said, he desired not to enjoy this present life for any other end than to rejoice that God had preserved him. It is well known that under the name of *daughter,* is meant a people or city; but here he designates the city itself by its chief part.

16 The heathen are drowned in the pit which they made; in the same net which they had hid privily, is their own foot taken.

17 The Lord is known by executing judgment;

the ungodly is snared in the work of his own hands. Higaion. Selah.

16 *The heathen are drowned.*] Now David being lifted up by faith, vaunts against his enemies. And first he says, metaphorically, that they are snared in their own wiliness and deceits; and then he expresses the same thing without a figure, that they were snared in their own wickedness. And he affirms that this happened not by chance, but was the work of God, and an illustrious proof of God's judgment. Moreover, not unadvisedly he compares his enemies to hunters, or fowlers, for though the ungodly often assail with violence and outrage, yet in craft and dark practices, they always follow their father Satan, the father of lies; and, therefore, what wit soever they have, they employ it in naughtiness and in devising of mischief. Therefore, as often as the ungodly guilefully practise mischief against us, let us remember, that it is not strange for the children of God to have nets and snares laid for them. And therewith let us call to mind this comfort, that whatsoever they attempt, the issue is not in their hand, but God will be against them, not only to disappoint them, but also to take them in the base devises which they invent, and to turn all their forces against their own heads.

17 *The Lord is known by executing judgment.*] Taken word for word it reads thus: *The known Lord hath done judgment.* But this is an abrupt manner of speech, its shortness making it obscure, and therefore it is expounded two ways, for some expound it, That God is then known, when he punishes the wicked. But the other sense is more appropriate; namely, That it is open and manifest to all men, that God fulfils the part of a Judge, as often as he taketh the wicked in their maliciousness. To be short, as oft as God retorts upon them the wicked practices which they devise, it shews that his judgment is more apparent, than that it may be ascribed either to nature or to fortune. As for us, if God at any time manifestly put forth the hand of his power, let us learn to open our eyes, that the judgments which he executeth upon the enemies of his church, may confirm our faith. The most probable reason why the Hebrew word *Higaion*, which properly signifies meditation, or musing upon a thing, is, I think, that David meant to fix godly minds in meditation upon God's judgments. To the same purpose serves the word *Selah*, which we have before told you regulated the song, so that the tune agreed with the subject and argument.

18 The wicked shall be turned into hell; and all the people that forget God.

19 For the poor shall not be forgotten for ever; the hope of the lowly shall not always perish.

18 *The wicked shall be turned.*] Some translate it in the optative mood, thus, *Let the wicked be turned, &c.* as if it were an imprecation. But rather, in my judgment, David confirms himself and all the godly for the time to come, declaring that whatsoever the wicked attempt shall fall out to their own harm. By the word *turn*, he means that there remains another issue for them than they think of. For there is in it a tacit contrast, between the height of their boldness, and the depth of their fall. For as they are held by no fear of God, they advance themselves above the clouds. Again; as though they were in league with death, as Isaiah says, xxviii. 15; *their pride passeth all measure.* Therefore, when we see them rage so fearlessly, the prophet warns us that their madness carries them headlong, so that at length they fall into the grave from which they thought themselves to be far off. In this place therefore is described unto us the sudden and unlooked for change, whereby God, when he listeth, restoreth things to order which were in confusion. As often then as the wicked soar out of all danger, let us with the eyes of faith behold the grave which is prepared for them; and let us be well assured, that God's hand, although it be unseen, is near, which in the midst of their course towards heaven, can, in the twinkling of an eye, turn them back unto hell. The Hebrew word שאולה, which is of doubtful signification, I scrupled not to translate *Hell.* For although I disapprove not what others translate it, *the Grave*, yet is it certain that the prophet signifies something more than common death; otherwise he would say nothing of the wicked, that would not befall the faithful as well as them. Therefore, as he speaks not simply concerning eternal destruction, so also under the metaphor of *Grave*, he gives us to understand, that all the ungodly shall perish; and that the froward boldness with which they vaunt themselves by all unlawful means to tread righteousness under foot, and to oppress the guiltless, shall turn to their own utter undoing. True it is that the faithful also go down into the grave, but not by such a violent shock as shall plunge them in without hope of coming out again. Nay, rather, even when they be laid up in their graves, they dwell nevertheless by hope in heaven.

19 *For the poor shall not be forgotten in the end.*] This is a confirmation of the former sentence, which is, that God will not forsake the poor and afflicted for ever. By which words he signifies that they may indeed seem to be forsaken for a time, by which we may feel assured that God's help is

promised us upon this condition, that it should not prevent our afflictions, but should succour us in the end after he had subdued us a long time under the cross. And David speaks of hope or expectation by name, thereby to exhort us unto prayer, for God winketh at our troubles, because he will have us to awake him with our prayers. For when he heareth our prayers, as though he began but then to remember us, he reacheth out his hand armed with full power to help us. But David repeats that this is not done forthwith, because we should not cease to hope, although good success smile not upon us at once.

20 Up, Lord, let not man grow strong; let the heathen be judged in thy sight.

21 Put them in fear, O Lord, that the heathen may know that they be man.

20 *Up, Lord.*] This word *up* is not referred to God, but to the outward appearance of the matter, and to our senses; because God is not perceived to be the deliverer of his servants, save when he appeareth to our eyes, as it were, sitting on his judgment-seat. The reason is added whereby God is induced to revenge the wrongs of his servants; namely, *lest man should grow strong*; because when God riseth up, all the fierceness of the ungodly must needs sink down. For whence comes it to pass that the wicked either vaunt themselves so boldly, or have so great power to work mischief, but because God resteth, and giveth them the rein. But as soon as he sheweth a token of his judgment, he will quell their insolent rage, and break their strength with his nod alone. We are taught by this form of praying, that although our enemies swell with fierce pride, still they are in God's hand, and can do no more than he permits them; and that there is no doubt God can make vain and disappoint all their purposes as oft as he listeth. And, therefore, he puts the name of man, which in Hebrew is derived from misery, as if one should term him in English, mortal, or frail. Moreever, God is said to judge the heathen before his face, when after a sort he compelleth them to stand at his judgment-seat. For we know that the unbelievers turn their backs upon God, and think him not their judge till they be drawn into his presence by force.

21 *Put them in fear, O Lord.*] The Greek interpreter translates this word מורה, a lawmaker, deriving it from the word ירה, which signifies sometimes, to teach. But the context requires that we should take it for fear, or dread;

and this is agreed upon by all the learned of sound judgment. Now it remains to be seen of what kind of fear he speaks. For God commonly subdueth even his chosen to obedience by fear. But because he tempereth his rigour towards them, and at the same time softeneth their stony hearts, so that they willingly and quietly submit themselves, he is not properly said to compel them by fear. Towards the reprobate he observes a totally different kind of dealing. For inasmuch as their hardness cannot be bent, so that it is easier to break them, than to amend them; he subdueth their untameable wilfulness by force, not that they fall to amendment, but that, whether they will or not, they are forced to acknowledge their own weakness. For although they fret never so much, and their fury boil over, nay, though by their truculence they surpass the wild beasts, yet when the terrible fear of God comes against them, they are overthrown by their own violence, and are borne down with their own weight. Some expound it concerning David, that God should bring the Gentiles under his yoke, and make them tributary to his kingdom; but this is too cold and constrained. For dread comprehends generally all kind of scourges, wherewith the wilfulness of those who would never obey God but by compulsion is subdued. Afterwards follows that to which the heathen must be driven; namely, to acknowledge themselves to be mortal men; which, though it seem a thing of light importance at the first blush, yet contains no trivial doctrine. For what is man, that he dares move one finger of himself; and yet the wantonness of the wicked bounds forth as if they were free from all restraint. In their distempered imagination they challenge indeed to themselves whatsoever is proper unto God. In short, they would never rush into so great disorder, if they were not ignorant of their own estate. David indeed means not that the ungodly shall profit so far under God's correction, that they shall humble themselves truly and with their hearts. But the knowledge which he speaks of, is only experimentary; as if he had said, Lord, seeing that the ignorance of their own estate drives them headlong into madness, make them to perceive in very deed, that their strength is not according to their foolish presumption; and when their vain hope shall have disappointed them, let them lie confounded with shame. It may often come to pass, that those amend not who are warned of their infirmity; nevertheless, it is enough that their traitorous presumption is exposed to their shame, so as that it may appear, that the boldness which made them presume upon their own strength was ridiculous. As touching the chosen of God, they must profit after another

sort; namely, that being cast down with the feeling of their own infirmity, they may of their own accord utterly rid themselves of all presumptuousness. And so will it come to pass, if they shall bear in mind that they be but men; for it is skilfully and wisely said of Austin, that the whole lowliness of man consists in the knowledge of himself. Moreover, forasmuch as pride exists in all men by nature, it is requisite that God should strike fear into all men indiscriminately, that the faithful may learn in meekness, and the reprobates, although they cease not to climb above the state of man, may be put back with shame.

PSALM X.

David complains in the name of himself and of all the godly, that deceitfulness, extortion, cruel violence, and all kind of wrongful dealings reign everywhere in the world; and he assigns the cause to be, that the ungodly and wicked, being drunk with the joyful and prosperous success of their affairs, have shaken off reverence of God, and think they may do what they list without control. Therefore he calls upon God for help, that he should remedy these desperate mischiefs. At length he comforts himself and the rest of the faithful, with hope of deliverance. Moreover, this description represents a lively image of the public state corrupted and perverted, as it were, in a glass. Therefore, when iniquity abounds, like a flood, (to the intent that the strangeness of the temptation should not shake the faith of God's children in suchwise as their hearts should quail,) let them learn to cast their eyes back to this looking-glass. For this comparison greatly avails to the assuaging of grief, that nothing befalls us at this day which God's church has not experienced of old; but rather that we are exercised in the same trials with David and the other holy patriarchs. Again; The faithful are warned, that God must be sought in such confusion of things; because, unless they assign the part of succouring unto God, they shall avail nothing by their blind fretting and flinging their complaints into the air.

1 Lord, why standest thou aloof? and winkest at the needful times in trouble?

2 In pride the ungodly persecute the poor; let them be caught in the wiles which they imagine.

Lord, why standest.] We see how the prophet, seeking redress of his desperate misfortunes, makes suit direct unto God by name, even at the very beginning. And this must we hold for a rule, that when we are troubled and heavy, we must seek comfort at God's providence. For

among the turmoilings and heats of our cares, we must always be steadfast in this belief, that it is his peculiar charge to help the wretched and afflicted with his aid. Notwithstanding, improperly, and with reference to human affections, he says, that God standeth afar off, from whose eyes nothing is hid. But forasmuch as God giveth us leave to talk with him after the manner of men, these expressions contain no absurdity, provided we know that that is but figuratively applied unto God, which our sense conceives by the present beholding of matters. For indeed it may fall out that some righteous man redresses not the wrong that is done to a poor man before his face, because he is not able; but the case cannot stand so with God, who is evermore armed with invincible power. Wherefore, if he let it slip, it is all one as if he withdrew himself afar off. The word תעלים, which signifies to hide, is expounded two ways. For according to some, David finds fault with God for hiding himself, as though he disdained to regard worldly matters. Others, take it for to close the eyes, or to wink, which seems the plainer of the two. And it is to be noted, that although David complain here that God is far off, yet was he fully persuaded that he was present with him, for else it had been in vain to have called unto him. The interrogation which he uses, tends to this purpose: Lord, what meaneth this, that whereas it belongeth to thee to govern the world, and whom thou sustaineth by thy power, him also to direct with thy righteousness, thou shewest not thyself a defender against the presumptuousness of the ungodly no sooner? Howbeit, David speaks in such-wise, not so much to find fault, as to encourage himself to assuredness of obtaining. According to the weakness of his understanding, he says, it is against reason that God should cease so long from his duty; and yet, in the mean while, he fails not to yield him his honour; and by his prayers he discharges into his lap that great burden of trouble wherewith he was overladen. Hereunto also pertains that which follows: *At needful times.* For admit that God stretcheth not out his hand at every moment, yet when he sees the simple and innocent oppressed, it is not then time for him to defer any longer. For the fit time for action is briefly defined to be, when the faithful are in distress. Of which manner of speaking we have entreated in the last Psalm, and in the tenth verse.

2 *In pride.*] Before he go about to pray against the ungodly, he briefly lays their fault open; namely, that they vex the afflicted cruelly, for none other cause but that they proudly despise them. And he enhances their cruelty not

a little by this circumstance, that having forgotten all humanity, they spitefully vaunt themselves against the poor and afflicted. Truly, cruelty is always proud: yea, rather, pride is the mother of all wrongs. For unless a man from being puffed up preferred himself before his neighbours, and disdained them by taking more upon himself than he ought to do, even common humanity would teach us how to deal modestly and uprightly. But David means here to express, how the lofty and overbearing spirit of the ungodly, whom he accuses, is the only cause why, though unprovoked, they rage against them that be in misery and need. The word דלק in Hebrew, signifies, as well to suffer persecution, as also to persecute. And, therefore, some like better to expound it in the middle voice, for it would also be not improperly translated, that the poor burns in the pride of the ungodly, because this is the more common signification of the word. For the pride of the ungodly devoureth afflicted souls like fire.

3 For the ungodly praiseth *himself* in the desire of his own soul; and the boisterous man blesseth *himself,* and despiseth the Lord.

4 The ungodly in the height of his nostrils, regardeth not; all his crafts *shew that he thinks there is* no God.

3 *For the ungodly praiseth.*] This verse is variously expounded. Some translate the words *ungodly* and *boisterous* in the accusative case, thus: He praiseth the ungodly in the desire of his soul, and blesseth the boisterous man; he despiseth the Lord. For they think it harsh, that words, whose signification passes into another thing, should be put absolutely, without the word whereinto their signification passes. But as it is sufficiently known, that among the Hebrews, the word whereinto the signification passes is oftentimes left unexpressed, where he that does and he that suffers is all one person, in my opinion, the interpretation I have followed will be the more commodious and apter; that is to wit, that the ungodly person praises or vaunts himself in the lust of his soul, and that he blesses himself. The question now is, what manner of desire of the soul this is. For the most part it is wont to be taken thus: that the ungodly sport themselves and make great joy when the world goes on their sides, and when they obtain whatsoever it comes in their mind to wish, according as he will add soon after, that they abuse their prosperous state to attempt whatsoever they list. But in my opinion, *the desire of the*

soul, in this place, signifies rather their lust and unruliness; so that the meaning is: that they sweetly sooth themselves in their lewd lusts, and despising God's judgment, without remorse acquit themselves of all guilt; instead whereof, Moses, in Deut. xxix. 19. says, that they bless their souls, for the inventions and devices of their own heart. Indeed, soon after, David will say that the ungodly abuse their prosperity to make themselves sport. But now, in my judgment, he comprises matter of more weight; namely, that they acquire praise from their presumptuousness, and that they glory in their wickedness; and the fearlessness they engendered is the cause of their unbridled insolence. And therefore I interpret the words *praise* and *bless* to signify both one thing, like as *ungodly* and *boisterous* are also of one signification, appertaining to the present place, though that they differ between themselves, as the general and the special. Herewith agrees what is added immediately, in the end of the verse, that those ungodly persons. despise God. For whereas some translate it *to blaspheme*, and others *to provoke to anger*, it is too far from the context. Nay, rather David teaches, that the cause of their careless soothing of themselves, is the contempt of God. For he that thinks that God shall be his judge, has a terror before his eyes, that he dares not sooth his own soul, when his conscience accuses him of evil.

4 *The ungodly in the height.*] Others translate it thus: *The ungodly, by reason of the violence of his own anger*, or *in the pride he displays, regards not God.* But they partly pervert, and partly weaken the sense which David means to express. First, the word *regard*, being used absolutely, is restrained improperly, whereas David means simply that the ungodly, without regard, give themselves leave to do anything, or make no difference between lawful and unlawful, because their own lust is their law; or because, being as it were utterly lawless, they imagine to be lawful whatsoever they list. The beginning of well-doing in a man's whole life is heedfulness: that is to wit, when we are not rashly carried away after our own fancy, nor after the headiness of our own flesh. The desire of taking heed springeth from modesty, when we set God over us as our judge and ruler, as right is. Rightly, therefore, does the prophet say, that the ungodly setting aside all discretion, do recklessly adventure upon whatsoever they have a mind unto; because, being puffed up with pride, they leave no power of judgment unto God. I doubt not but that אף is taken in its proper and natural signification in this place, and not metaphorically for anger, inasmuch as scornful per-

sons bewray their shamelessness even in their countenance also. In the second member, the prophet lays more sternly, or at least more openly to their charge, that all their wicked imaginations shew that they have no God. By which words I understand, that they turn all right and conscience upsidedown by their sacrilegious boldness, as though there were no God in heaven; for if they believed that there were any God, the fear of the judgment to come would restrain them. Not that they expressly deny there is a God, but because they bereave him of his power. For God would be but as an idol, if he should content himself with an idle being, and give over the office of a judge. Therefore, they abolish God, as much as in them lies, whosoever they be, that submit not this world to his providence; or that think not his hand to be stretched out to govern it. And it is not enough to form a cold conception of the judgment of God; for the true knowledge of his providence is that which keeps us in awe of him. The greater part of interpreters take this generally, that all the thoughts of a wicked man tend to the denial of God. I am of opinion, that the word מזמות is taken in a bad sense here, as it is often elsewhere, for guileful and wicked thoughts; so that that is the meaning which I have noted; namely, that forasmuch as the ungodly dare practise anything, it appears thereby sufficiently, that all fear of God is expunged from their hearts.

5 His ways are prospered at all times; on high are thy judgments before him; he puffeth at all his enemies.

6 He sayeth in his heart, I shall not stagger while the world standeth, because I am past harm taking.

In the beginning of the verse the interpreters vary not a little. The Greek interpreter, because he thought that the future tense חלל was deduced from the root יחילו, translated it, *his ways are defiled.* But among the Hebrews it is sufficiently agreed, that it is deduced from the root חול. But many take it actively, *to put one in fear*, or *to put one to trouble;* as if it had been said, The ways of the ungodly are dreadful to the good, and trouble them. Some also apply it unto God, that his ways come, that is to say, prosper at all times; still, in my judgment, it is too forced. But seeing that in other places of scripture it imports as much as to be prospered, I marvel that there is any controversy among the learned about this place, since, soon

after, in the second member, the prophet shews evidently, that he speaks of the prosperous state of the ungodly, and of their continual holding on in pleasure, which makes them drunken. And he not only complains of this their felicity, but also enhances their offence for hardening themselves in their maliciousness, because God is good unto them. And therefore I resolve it in this wise; that forasmuch as they swim in continual prosperity, they dream that they have God tied to them, and so it comes to pass that they drive his judgments far from them; and if any man withstand them, they at once believe they may shake him off with a puff. Now we understand the plain meaning of the prophet to be, that the ungodly mock God, under pretence of his forbearing: as the base tyrant Dionysius, because he had a prosperous voyage, boasted that the gods favoured the sacrilegious. Hence it comes to pass, that they put God's judgments from them as far as may be. For whereas many think, that *the being of God's judgments on high unto them,* implies as much as if the prophet should say, there is too much favour shewn them; as in another place he complains that they are exempted from common adversities, it agrees not so aptly with the words, but rather it seems to be harsh and wrested. Therefore, God's judgments are said to be on high to the ungodly, because presuming upon the far distance of them, they promise themselves not only a truce during their whole life, but also a league with death for evermore. For we see how by putting off the time, they contract a lethargy; or rather, imagining God to be prisoned up in heaven, as though they had nothing to do with him, they assure themselves that they shall escape unpunished; as in Isa. xxii. 13. they scoff at the threatenings of the prophets, with, *Let us eat and drink, to-morrow we shall die.* For when the prophets put God's people in fear with stern denunciation of his vengeance, these men cried that they were but fables. And therefore God inveigheth sharply against them, because when he called the people to mourning, ashes, and sackcloth, these men persuaded them to minstrelsy and feasting. And at length he adds another: *As I live, this iniquity shall not be blotted out.* Indeed the faithful lift up their eyes on high, that they may look up to God's judgments; but they are no less afraid of them, than if they were now ready to light upon their heads. Contrariwise the ungodly, although they despise them, yet, lest they should be troubled with fear or care of them, they banish them into heaven, as the Epicureans do: who, daring not to deny God flatly, surmise that he takes his ease in idleness. Out of this doltishness springs that presumption, whereof

David speaks, that they doubt not but what enemies soever they have, they shall destroy them with a blast only. For the word פוח, which now and then signifies *to entrap*, is in this place more aptly taken *to puff up*, or *to blow up*. He confirms the same meaning in the next verse; namely, that they are fully persuaded in their hearts, that they are quite out of all danger of alteration. Now, then, although they oftentimes pour out such proud speeches, yet David inveighs only against the hidden ulcer of their vile arrogance, which they foster within, and therefore he rehearses not what they speak with their mouths, but what they are persuaded of in their hearts. But here, it is asked, why David finds fault with that in others, which he openly admits so often of himself. For upon trust of God's help, he vaunts himself stoutly against all dangers; and surely it becomes the faithful to rest their welfare on a sure foundation, so that they may feel themselves to stand upon safe ground though the world should fall a hundred times. But the solution is easy; that the faithful promise themselves assurance not elsewhere than in God; and yet such assurance, that they acknowledge themselves to be subject to all storms, and patiently submit themselves to them. Therefore these two things differ a good deal from one another, that a despiser of God, who has prosperous fortune to-day, should so far forget his mortal state that he should by false imagination build himself a nest above the clouds: and again; that a godly man, while he sees his life to hang by a thread, and that it is besieged by a thousand deaths, offering himself to suffer any manner of tribulations, and living no otherwise in the world than as if he were sailing upon a stormy sea, should nevertheless assuage his troubles, and comfort his sorrows, with assurance of the grace of God alone. The ungodly says, I shall not be removed, or I shall not stagger for ever; verily, because he thinks the firmness of his strength to be sufficient to sustain all assaults. The faithful says, What though I chance to stagger, yea, and to fall, and thereupon to sink to the bottom? yet shall not my fall be to destruction, because God shall put his hand under me. Hereby also is another question resolved: for the faithful, being fearful in themselves, flee with all speed to the sanctuary of God's grace: but the ungodly, although they be afraid at the noise of a leaf falling from a bough, and live in continual unquietness, yet case themselves with the callousness of lethargy, or induce an insane giddiness, so that, estranged from themselves, they perceive not their own evils. The rendering of the cause which follows in these words, *Because I am past harm taking*, admits of two constructions. Either

that the ungodly conceive hope of a quiet and a joyful state by reason of their former impunity; or, that by reason of a deceitful imagination, they exempt themselves from the common condition of men; according as in Isaiah xxviii. 15. they say, *When the storm shall pass by, it shall not touch us at all.*

7 His mouth is full of cursing, and deceit, and malice; under his tongue is trouble and wickedness.

8 He will sit in the thievish corners of the streets; in his lurking-holes will he murder the innocent; his eyes will be leering upon the poor.

9 He will lie in wait privily, as a lion in his den; he will lie in wait to catch up the poor; he will snatch up the poor by drawing him into his net.

10 He will crouch low, and cast himself down; and then shall the army of the afflicted fall into the danger of his strengths.

7 *His mouth is full of cursing.*] These four verses tend to this effect, that if God be minded to succour his servants, it is now high time to do it, because the fury of the ungodly has burst forth to the utmost excess that can be. First, he complains that their tongues are fraught with perjuries and fraud, and that they carry or hide trouble and extortion, because there can be no dealing with them in any matter without damage. The word אלה, which they translate cursing, is not an exsecration in words which they hurl at others, but rather a devoting of their own heads, because they scruple not to wish any evil to themselves, that they may the better beguile others. And therefore some have not done amiss in translating it, *forswearing*. For this word must be joined to the other two. Then curse they so far as serves to deceive, and to work mischief, and thence springs trouble and wrongful dealing, because the simple cannot without harm, escape their snares, which are woven of deceit, forswearing, and malice.

8 *He will sit in the thievish corners of the streets.*] Forasmuch as words of the future tense imply a continued act, I have purposely avoided changing them into another tense, because this Hebraism has extended to other tongues also. David therefore describes what the ungodly are wont to do. And first of all, he likens them to thieves, that beset the narrow passages of ways, and make themselves haunts, out of which they fall upon travellers unawares. Also he says,

that their eyes are leering, by a similitude drawn from darters, who take their level with their eyes half shut, that they may hit the mark the surer. Neither speaks he here of the common sort of thieves, but he directs his language against the great thieves, who hide their wickedness under the titles of honour, pomp, and worship. Therefore, many translate the word חצרים palaces; as though David should say that they made royal palaces their thieving-places, to cut distressed men's throats in. But although I may grant the allusion, I keep still the thread of the similitude unbroken; and so I interpret it in this wise: that like as thieves beset the egresses of villages, so these lay their snares wheresoever they are. In the next verse, he represents their cruelty in a still more heinous light, by another comparison; saying, that they gape for their prey no less than lions in their dens. But to be on a level with the savage beasts, is a greater enormity than to make spoil after the manner of robbers. And it is to be noted, that he always joins deceit and treachery with violence, that he may express the more plainly how God's children would in all respects be most miserable, if they were not rescued by help from heaven. Also there is added another similitude, to express more plainly their crafty snarings mingled with cruelty. For he says that they snatch, but by drawing into their net. In which words his meaning is, that they not only run on with open violence and force of hand, but at the same time lay their nets wherewith to deceive. All this does he inculcate again in the tenth verse, exhibiting their gesture before our eyes, as it were, in a graphic sketch. They crouch, says he, and make low courtesy, lest peradventure they might scare people away with their fierceness; because they would fain catch with their baits those whom they cannot hurt unless they come somewhat near them. We see how he joins two things together; first, snares or gins; and afterwards sudden violence, as often as the prey falls into their hands. For by the second part he means that they fall on with cruel violence unawares, when they see the simple sort in danger of their wickedness, as if a lion should rouse himself furiously up from his couch to tear his prey in pieces. The sense is clear, that the ungodly are to be feared on all sides, because they dissemble their cruelty, till they find entangled in their nets those whom they covet to devour. There is some obscurity in the words. For whereas we have translated it *the army of the afflicted*, the Hebrew word חלכאים seems to some, to be of four letters; but they come nearer the truth who say it is acompound and is equivalent to two words. Therefore

although it be in the singular number, yet collectively, the prophet, by this word חלכאים, signifies a great company, which is afflicted by each of these lions. I have translated this word עצומים, strengths, in the form of a substantive. For there is no doubt that the prophet by this term denotes the talons and teeth of the lion, wherein consists the chief strength of that beast. Still, as *Toar* is properly a noun, it will not be unsuitable that the said talons and teeth should, by a similitude, be called strong soldiers. The sense comes to this; that although they hide their strength by crafty crouching, yet they will have in readiness, as it were, a band of armed champions, or both talons and teeth, as soon as occasion is offered them to work mischief.

11 He said in his heart, God hath forgotten it; he hath hidden his face and will never see it.

12 Up, Lord God, lift up thine hand; forget not the poor.

13 Why do the wicked despise God? he sayeth in his heart; Thou wilt not make any inquisition.

11 *He said in his heart.*] Again he notes the well-spring of presumptuousness; namely, that the wicked, by reason of God's winking at them, promise themselves to escape free; but forasmuch as they do not openly with their mouth thrust forth this impious blasphemy, *that God hath forgotten it, and that he hath shut his eyes because he would never see it*, but hide their thoughts deep within themselves, as Isaiah says, xxix. 15. the prophet uses the same form of speech as he had done before, and will repeat the third time; namely, that the ungodly say in their hearts, that God careth not for human affairs. And it must here be noted, that the ungodly so value their estate by its present appearance, that they imagine that God is in a manner bound to them. Thus it comes to pass, that they are without care for the future, because they consider that after God's long sufferance, he will not at any time call them to strict judgment.

12 *Up, Lord.*] Although all men are sick of this disease, that, according to the sense of their own flesh, they imagine God to sit idle, or to lie still, when he executeth not his judgments, yet is there a wide difference between the faithful and the reprobate, because the latter foster the error that is cast in their way by the weakness of the flesh, and eagerly draw flattering encouragements from the suggestions of their own dulness, until at length, through their wicked wilfulness, they harden themselves to gross contempt

of God. But the former soon dispel this false imagination from their minds, chastising themselves, and of their own accord calling themselves home again to their right senses; of which a goodly mirror is set before us in this place: for before, speaking after the manner of men, the prophet declares, that the same error crept upon himself, which he even now condemns in the despisers of God. But he proceeds at once to correct it; and laying on his hand, he wrestles with himself, restraining his thoughts, so that he conceive nothing unbeseeming the righteousness and glory of God. It is therefore a common seed of temptation sown in all men, to begin to doubt of God's providence, when he stayeth his hand and his judgment; but the godly differ much from the reprobate. For while one, forthwith correct the understanding of the flesh by faith; the other sooth themselves in their froward imagination. So David, by the word *up*, doth not so much awaken God, as he awakens himself, or strives to awaken himself, that he may hope for something more than he sees concerning God's help. This verse, therefore, contains a profitable doctrine; namely, the more the hardness of careless ignorance overgrows the ungodly, so that they persuade themselves that God regardeth not men's affairs, nor will punish wickedness, the more we must strive against it; yea rather their ungodliness must be an incitement to us sharply to repulse the doubtings, which they not only admit, but also studiously forge to themselves.

13 *Why doth the wicked despise God.*] Although it were superfluous to allege reasons to persuade God with, yet he gives us leave in our prayers to talk familiarly with him, just as a son talks with his earthly father. For the use of praying is always to be observed; namely, that God may be witness of all our affections; not that they would otherwise be hidden from him, but because, when we pour out our hearts before him, just so much are our cares abated, and assurance of obtaining increased. So David in this very place, setting before himself how unreasonable and intolerable a thing it were, that God should be despised by the wicked with impunity, thereupon conceives hope of redress. The same word is repeated now, which he had used before; which word some translate *to provoke*, and some *to blaspheme*. But doubtless that signification which I have preferred suits best the context; for when God is bereft of his power and office of judging, he is despitefully dragged from his throne, and as it were degraded. Moreover, as he had a little before complained that the ungodly deny God, or else imagine him to sit evermore asleep, with-

out any care of men; now, in the same way, he says he maketh no inquisition.

14 Thou hast seen it; for thou considerest trouble and vexation, that thou mayest put it in thine hand; upon thee shall the poor lean, thou shalt be a help to the fatherless.

15 Break thou the arm of the wicked and evil man; thou shalt seek his ungodliness, and shalt not find it.

14 *Thou hast seen.*] Here David, suddenly kindled with a holy zeal, advances into the lists, and, armed with faith, fiercely beats back those impious opinions. However, as he could avail nothing among men, he turns himself unto God. For as the ungodly, wishing to obtain liberty to work wickedness at their pleasure, withdraw themselves far from God, and through the error of their froward mind, fancy themselves far out of his reach; so, contrariwise, it is good for the faithful to gather in themselves from roving and wandering opinions; and, with minds lifted upward, to speak to God as it were face to face. David therefore had good cause to turn his mind from men, lest he should yield to men's blasphemies. A reason is given to confirm this meaning; namely, God considereth the troubles and vexations of men. For inasmuch as it belongs to God only, to take cognisance of all wrongs, David gathers that it cannot happen that he should close his eyes, when the ungodly confound right and wrong in their fury. Further, he descends from the general to the particular subject before him, which must be particularly noted; for nothing is more easy than to confess in general terms that God regards the world, and men's matters; but to apply this doctrine to our daily uses, is the hardest thing that can be. And yet we receive but cold comfort from what the scripture speaks concerning God's power and justice, unless each apply the same thing to himself, according as need may require. Therefore let us learn by David's example to reason, that, seeing it is God's part to mark whatsoever harm is done to the good and simple, he considereth our troubles and sorrows, yea, even when he winketh at them for a time. Again; he adds, that God doth not with idle gaze look down from heaven upon the things that are done here, but taketh upon him to judge them. For to put it in his hand, is nothing less than to make inquisition earnestly and effectually. Still it is our duty to rest patiently, as long as vengeance is in

God's keeping, until he stretcheth out his arm to help us. Therefore follows, *upon thee shall the poor lean.* By which David means, that we must give God's providence time, that when the godly are miserably oppressed they may cast their cares into God's bosom, and after they have put their welfare into his hand, be in no haste for the accomplishment of their desires, but take breath after disburdening themselves, until God shew by the deed itself the fitting time for action. Therefore, whosoever puts himself under the protection of God, leaves all to him, fully persuaded that as he is a faithful keeper, he may quietly wait for the seasonable time of his deliverance. Some read it passively, *the poor shall be left.* But the first construction is the best, and agrees with the rules of grammar, saving that it is a defective form of expression; because it is not expressed what he leaves. But this defect is common among the Hebrews, and there is no obscurity in the thing itself; namely, that the prayers of all the godly shall not be in vain, when they commit themselves and their affairs to God. For these two members are connected, *upon thee shall the poor lean,* and *thou shalt be a helper to the fatherless.* By a metaphor he terms him fatherless, whom he had before called poor. And the verb of the past tense denotes a continued act.

15 *Break thou the arm.*] This form of expression has the same import as to crush power. And it is not a prayer only; but because our enemies for the most part shake our minds as though there were no obstacle that could check it, David, lest he might sink under the terrors, supports his faith with this prop, that, as soon as it shall please God to humble the ungodly, he shall bring them, and whatsoever they practice to nought; wherefore, that the meaning may be more manifest, the sentence is to be resolved in this manner; Lord, as soon as it shall please thee to break the arm of the ungodly, thou wilt cause him to fall to nothing, in the twinkling of an eye, and make the headlong might wherewith he rushes into mischief to consume away. Truly, David prays God to hasten his help and vengeance, yet in the meanwhile he sustains himself with this comfort, that the ungodly wanton not but by the sufferance of God; because it is in his power to annihilate them with his look only, as soon as he gets him up into his judgment-seat. And doubtless even as the sun at his rising dispels mists and clouds with his heat, even so, when God putteth forth his hand to execute the part of a judge, he restores to tranquillity all that was troubled or confused. In my judgment he has employed these words; namely, the wicked and evil man, to increase the force; as if he had said, how much soever evil

men rave in their malice and ungodliness, yet God has a remedy ready in his hand.

16 The Lord is king for ever and ever; the heathen are perished out of his land.

17 Thou hast heard the desire of the poor, O Lord; thou shalt direct their heart; thine ear shall hear.

18 That thou mayest judge the fatherless and the poor; that the man proceed not to fray them any more from out of the earth.

16 *The Lord is king for ever and ever.*] Now David, as though he had obtained his heart's desire, rises up to holy rejoicing. For in that he calls God an everlasting king, it is a testimony of trust and gladness. By the title of king he challenges for him the office of governing the world; and the everlastingness of his reign pertains to this point, that it is absurd to inclose him within the strait bounds of time. For inasmuch as the passage of man's life is but short, even those that be princes of the mightiest and greatest kingdoms, because they are mortal, do for the most part disappoint their servants; according as Psalm cxlvi. 2. 3. warns us, that *there is no trust to be put in princes, or in the sons of men, in whom there is no health, because their breath shall go out of them, and return into the earth from whence it came; and then shall all their thoughts perish.* For often times their strength fails them, and while they prepare themselves slowly to help men, the occasion slips away from them. But of the heavenly king we must have a more exalted opinion; because although he execute not his judgments out of hand, yet his power remains evermore the same, always full and perfect. Finally, he reigneth everlastingly, not for himself alone, but for us; so as that long delay can no whit hinder him from stretching out his hand in due season, to help even those that be dead, or past hope of recovery. *The heathen are perished.* The meaning is, that the holy land was at length purged from the defilements and filthiness wherewith it was polluted. For horrible was the profanation, when the land that was given for a heritage to God's people, and allotted to his worshippers, fostered ungodly and wicked inhabitants. For by this word *heathen*, he means not foreigners, but hypocrites, who unjustly boasted of the name of God; like as at this day many, who are Christians, but in title only, occupy a place in the bosom of the church. And it is no new thing with the prophets to term those renegades that were fallen from the holy manners of the fathers, by the reproachful name of *heathen*; and to liken

them not only to the uncircumcised, but also to the Canaanites, who were most detestable of all. *Thy father was a Canaanite, and thy mother a Chittite,* Ezech. xvi. 3. such places are frequently met with. Therefore in shaming the false and bastard children of Abraham with the name of *heathen,* he thanks God that he had driven such corruptions out of his church. And by this example we are taught, that it is no new thing, if at this day also heathenish men defile the church of God. Notwithstanding, we must beseech God to purge his house with speed, and not to leave his house like a dunghill, to swine and dogs.

17 *The desire of the poor.*] By these words the prophet confirms what I said even now; namely, that when hypocrites reign in the church, or with their multitude overwhelm the faithful, we must pray to God without ceasing, that he will root them out. For there is just cause for the servants of God to be vexed and grieved at so foul confusion. And by this oracle the Holy Ghost assureth us, that we at this day shall obtain the same thing which God granted at the request of the fathers in old time, if, as it becomes us, we be careful for the deliverance of the church. The expression, *thou shalt direct their hearts,* is diversely expounded by interpreters. Unto some it seems to imply as much as to give success to their desires. To others it signifies to frame the heart, that the faithful may not request any thing, save that which is right and just, as Paul says, that *the Spirit stirreth up unspeakable groanings within us;* Rom. viii. 16. Peradventure either of these two expositions is too much strained. For first David commends God's grace in that he sustaineth his worshippers in their troubled estate, so that they discourage not themselves; furnishing them with fortitude and patience, raising them up to good hope, and stirring them also to prayer. For the word כין signifies not only to direct, but also to establish. Truly it is a singular benefit of God when he upholdeth our understanding in temptation, and suffereth it not to be led another way. Soon after follows the other part, that the affections of the godly are not directed in vain, to frame themselves to obedience with hope and patience, and to have an eye unto God, and to call upon him. For God's ears are not deaf to their sighs. Thus the mutual harmony of a twofold grace is here extolled, that God suffereth not his servants to quail, or to fall from faith, or to give over praying, but calleth them back again to him, until it appear by the deed itself, that their hope was not fond, nor in vain. The sentence might well be resolved thus; Thou shalt establish the heart of them, until thine ear may hear them.

18 *That thou mayest judge.*] He applies this next sentence to a special use, that the faithful who are wrongfully oppressed, should not doubt but that at length God will be the avenger that shall deliver them. By which words he warns us, that we must persevere manfully under the cross and tribulation; because God ofttimes will not succour his servants, until they be brought to the last cast. Surely this is a hard thing to do, because every one of us could find in his heart to be privileged from tribulation; and therefore, unless God serve our turn with speed, he seemeth to be slack and slow. But if we mean to make room for his help, we must cool our heat, bridle our impatience, and mitigate our sorrow, until the time that our miseries may provoke God's grace.

Proceed not any more.] Once again he commends God's might in breaking the ungodly, so as that amid their outrageous assaults, we may take this for a grounded principle, that all that ever they practise shall vanish away, as soon as the Lord shall think it good. Some take the word אֱנוֹשׁ in the neuter gender, so that the sense should be; *That mortal men may be no more afraid.* But reason requires that it should be expounded transitively. And it is not against reason, that the ungodly, though they lift their heads above the clouds, should be called mortal, or men subject to many miseries; for by this means their mad presumption is obliquely reprobated, in that forgetting their state, they breathe out cruel menaces, and puff out horrible terrors, as though not even God himself were able to repress their waywardness. Also this phrase, *from out of the earth,* contains a tacit antithesis between the low dwelling of the earth and the highness of the heavens. For from whence go they forth to assault the children of God? Verily, even out of the ground; just as if little worms should creep out of the crannies of the earth. And yet in this wise they assault God himself, who promiseth help to his servants from heaven.

PSALM XI.

This Psalm consists of two parts. In the first, David shews what hard assaults of temptation he had encountered, and with what great heaviness he had been distressed at the time that Saul persecuted him. In the second, he rejoices in his own behalf for the help sent him from God, and praises God's righteousness in ruling the world.

[*To the chief Chanter. A Psalm of David.*]

2 In the Lord do I put my trust: how say you to my soul; Flee ye into your hill as a bird?

3 Surely, behold, the ungodly shall bend their bow, they have made ready their arrows upon the string, to shoot privily at those that be true of heart.

4 Surely, the foundations be thrown down; What hath the righteous done?

In the Lord.] Almost all the interpreters think this a complaint wherein David accuses his countrymen, that when seeking everywhere for hiding-places, yet he could nowhere find any commiseration. And it is true, indeed, that when he strayed hither and thither to flee the cruelty of Saul, he could nowhere find any safe refuge, at least where he might continue any while in rest. Wherefore he had good cause to find fault with his own people, for that no one of them could find in his heart to harbour him in the time of his exile. But I suppose he has respect to a higher thing. For when all men vied with each other to drive him to despair, it could not be but that, according to the infirmity of the flesh, he must be afflicted, and that not lightly. But fortified by faith, he leaned fearlessly and steadfastly on God's promises, so that he yielded not at all to temptations. These spiritual encounters doth he now rehearse, wherewith God exercised him in his utmost perils. Therefore, as I said just now, it is proper that this Psalm be divided into two parts. For before David commends God's righteousness in defending the welfare of the godly, he shews how he has encountered death itself, and yet through faith and an upright conscience, obtained the victory. In the first place, forasmuch as all men counselled him to forsake his country, and to hide himself somewhere in exile, because there remained no hope of life for him, except he would abandon his promised kingdom, against this wrongheaded counsel he sets the shield of his trust in God. But before I speak any more of the matter, it is fitting to interpret the words. The word נוד, which we have translated *to flee*, is written in the plural number, and yet is read in the singular number, which I think to be done corruptly. For inasmuch as David reports this to be spoken to himself only, the Hebrew doctors, supposing the plural number unsuitable to it, ventured to read it otherwise than it was written. Which thing is gathered more plainly from this, that some of them being desirous to keep still the literal sense, torture themselves sorely, why it was said *flee ye*, rather than *flee thou*, and in the end they flee to a vain subtlety, as though the procurers of his flight should speak as well to his body as his soul. But to trouble themselves so much in a matter of no difficulty, was un-

necessary; for it is certain that David was not bidden to get him away alone, but with his company, who were all of them in the same danger that he was. Therefore though they spake unto David alone, above all the rest, yet they comprehended his company also, whose case was all one with his, and who were in the same peril that he was. Also the interpreters vary in that which follows. Many translate it, *from your hill,* as if it were מהרכם; and according to their saying, it is a changing of the person. For it should have been said, *flee thou out of our hill:* but this, of itself, is harsh and constrained. And to little better purpose serves it, that they will have Jewry to be called the hill. Others think it should be read הר כמו צפור; that is to say, into the hill as a bird, without the words *your, our,* or any other pronoun. But if we follow what I have said, the text will run very well thus: *flee ye into your hill;* for there is no place for you to dwell in in your country. And yet I think not that any certain hill is meant, but that David was sent away into desert rocks, whithersoever chance led him. Finding fault with the authors of this counsel, he protests that he trusts so much to God's promise, that he will in no-wise yield his consent to such a banishment. Such, therefore, was David's state, that in his extreme necessity all men thrust him out far away into desert places. But, forasmuch as he seems to intimate, that it were a token of distrust to place his surety in flight, it is a question whether it was lawful for him to flee or no: yea rather, we know he had been driven about from time to time into sundry places of refuge, and now and then also he had hid himself in caves. I answer, although he were restless like the timid bird, and was fain to make divers wanderings, to get out of the way of his enemies' fowling nets; yet he stood always so firm in faith, that he never estranged himself from the people of God. For although in other men's sight he were a forlorn person, and as it were a rotten member, yet he never separated himself from the body of the church. And surely that saying, *flee ye,* tended to nothing but utter despair. But he ought not to have given way, and so to have fled, because he was uncertain of the issue. And therefore he says expressly, that this was spoken to his soul, signifying thereby that his heart was stricken quite through with that reproachful casting off: forasmuch as he saw it tended to none other end, as I said, save only to weaken his faith. The sum of it is this: that whereas he had always lived without hurting any man, as it became a pure worshipper of God, yet was he condemned to banishment for ever. And this verse teaches us, that although the world vex us never

so much, yet must we stand still to our post, lest we fall from God's promises, or lest God's promises slip from us: and that howsoever we be tossed up and down, we must set the foot of our vocation sure in faith.

3 *Surely, behold, the ungodly.*] Some suppose that this is added by way of excuse, in the person of them that bade David save himself by flight. According to others, David finds fault with his countrymen, who perceiving death to menace him on all sides, nevertheless denied him harbour. But rather in my judgment, he proceeds with his matter: for it is his purpose to set before men's eyes, not only the dangers wherewith he was besieged, but also death itself. And therefore he says that wheresoever he hide himself, he cannot escape out of his enemies' hands. Again, the description of so miserable an estate better illustrates the deliverance which God sent afterwards. As for the words; whereas he says that the ungodly are busy in shooting privily, some take it metaphorically, because they essayed to compass him by craft and policy. Still, the simpler sense pleases me better; that there is nothing so hidden but that the enemies' darts pierce it, and therefore that death will be his inseparable companion even into all caves.

4 *Surely, the foundations.*] Some translate the word השתות, *nets:* in which sense the scripture often uses the same word elsewhere: and they interpret it, that the wicked guiles wherewith the ungodly assailed David, were disappointed; which interpretation, if we admit, then when he adds forthwith, *and what hath the righteous man wrought?* the sense will be, that he escaped not in safety by his own travail and policy, but rather was plucked out of the nets or snares of his enemies by the power of God, even when he was at rest, and as it were asleep. But the term *foundation* suits the context better; because he proceeds to report to what shifts he was driven, so that there was then no safeguard for him. And yet the interpreters agree not in the sense: some interpret it, that there was no place for him to stay his foot upon; and some, that the covenants in which there ought to have been firmness, were broken from time to time by Saul. There are some also that understand it allegorically, that is to say, that the righteous priests of God, who were the upholders of the land, were put to death. But doubtless I suppose it to be a metaphor taken from buildings, which must needs fall down and utterly go to wreck, when their foundations be undermined: so that David complains that he was utterly overthrown in the eyes of the world, and had nothing left him undestroyed of all his possessions. Afterwards he repeats, that to be punished so

cruelly, was more than he deserved. And this he does, partly to comfort himself in his adversities with the witness of a good conscience, and partly to smooth the way to hope for deliverance. For thereby was he encouraged to trust, because that by the goodness of his cause he conceived that God stood on his side, and would be favourable unto him.

5 The Lord is in the palace of his holiness; as for the Lord, his seat is in heaven; his eyes will see, *and* his eyelids will consider the children of men.

6 The Lord will allow the righteous man, but as for the ungodly and him that loveth iniquity, his soul hateth him.

5 *The Lord is in the palace.*] Now follows that glorying which I spake of: for David being shut out from man's help, betakes himself to God's providence. And, as I have said elsewhere, this is a signal trial of faith, when being encompassed round about with darkness in this world, we seek light from heaven to guide us into hope of salvation. For although all men confess that the world is governed by the power of God, yet when sorrowful confusion of things overcasts them with darkness, there are but few that have this assured persuasion settled in their minds. But by the example of David we must make such account of God's providence, that when things are utterly forlorn, we may hope for redress from his judgment. For between *heaven and earth* there is an unexpressed antithesis; because if David's apprehension had lingered in the earthly and visible state of things, he would have found no way of escape. But now, although in the world all equity lie trodden under foot, and all faithfulness have perished, yet he bethinks him how God sitteth unchanged in heaven, at whose hand redress of ruined order is to be looked for. For he says not barely, that God dwelleth in heaven, but that he reigneth as it were in a princely palace, and holdeth a court of judgment there. And surely, his rightful honour is not otherwise yielded unto him, unless we be fully resolved of this, that his judgment-seat is a holy sanctuary to all those that be in misery, and wrongfully oppressed. Wherefore, when craft, guile, falsehood, cruelty, violence, and extortion, run riot in the world, and all things are confounded in the mists of mischief and wickedness, yet let faith give us light to behold God's heavenly throne, and let this beholding suffice to make us bear them to the end. The temple of his holiness, or his holy temple, which is most commonly taken for Sion,

here doubtless signifies heaven, which the repetition also shews; for it is certain that he expresses one thing twice, *his eyes will see.* From the last sentence he gathers, that nothing is hidden from God, and therefore that at length all men's deeds shall come to account before him. For if God reign in heaven, and have his throne settled there, it follows that it cannot be but he must have a regard to men's affairs, to execute his judgment at length. For Epicurus and such like, who surmise him to be idle, do rather make a couch for him than set him up a judgment-seat. But faith glories in this, that God, the maker of the world, in nowise neglecteth that order which he hath created. And although he suspend his judgments for a time, yet must we rest ourselves in his beholding alone, like as now we see David contented with this one only comfort, that God is the ruler of mankind, and that he marketh whatsoever is done in the world, although the knowledge thereof appear not forthwith. A clearer exposition also is added soon after; that God discerneth between the righteous and unrighteous, yea, and that in suchwise as that he is no idle looker on: for he is said to allow the righteous and to hate the ungodly. The word בחז, which we have translated *to allow*, often signifies trial. But in this place I interpret it simply, that God so inquireth into every man's cause, as that he maketh a difference between the godly and the ungodly. Moreover he saith, that such as give themselves to doing wrong and offences, are hateful to him, because, according as he hath ordained mutual communion among men, so will he have us to keep the same unimpaired. Therefore, that he may maintain his holy ordinance, it behoveth him to be an enemy to the wicked, who are troublesome to others. Also to the rightful hatred of God is here opposed the love of unrighteousness, that we may know that they who please themselves in their evil doings, profit nothing by such self-delusion.

7 Upon the ungodly he will rain snares, fire and brimstone, and storm of whirlwinds, the portion of their cup.

8 For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance alloweth the righteous.

7 *Upon the ungodly.*] Now last of all, David lays it down for a principle, that although God linger and delay for a while, yet the time of vengeance will surely come; and so we see him climb by degrees to the hope of a happy end, so that the disorder of all things impairs not his faith: because

God's throne abideth steadfast in heaven, he sustains himself with his overseeing providence. Afterwards he weighs what the office of a judge requires; whence he gathers, that men's deeds escape not God's sight, and that although he do not forthwith punish their evil doings, he hateth all the wicked. In the end he adds, that since God is armed with power, that hatred of his shall not be in vain, or to no purpose. Therefore, how long soever God delay his punishment, the acknowledgment of his justice will adequately cherish our hope, until he make proof by deed, that he hath never departed from his watch-tower. Truly, with judgment he compares God's punishments to rain: for, like as rain is not continual, but the Lord sendeth it forth as oft as he listeth, yea, and suddenly raiseth up hail and violent showers, when there was fairest weather, so means he that sudden vengeance is at hand for the ungodly, that they may perish in a moment, even when they be merry and intoxicated with their delights. Notwithstanding, it is true that David alludes to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah: for, like as the prophets when they would promise God's grace to the elect, make mention of the redemption once wrought; so also when they mean to put the reprobate in fear, they threaten the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; and not without good reason, as Jude in his epistle teaches us, that in the same there remains a continual example of God's wrath. Wisely and elegantly also places he snares before he comes to fire and brimstone. For we know that as long as God spareth the wicked, they fear nothing, but frowardly leap about as it were in a clear field. Again, if any adversity hang over them, they seek escapes to slip out at; and finally, they always mock at God as though they could not be overtaken, until he hamper them in his snares. God therefore beginneth his vengeance with snares, foreclosing all escapes to the ungodly. And when he holdeth them ensnared and bound, he thundereth upon them dreadfully and horribly, like as he consumed Sodom and the neighbouring cities, with fire from heaven. Some translate the word זלעפות, kindlings, or burnings; and others commotions, or terrors. But the context requires the interpretation which I have proposed, for stormy winds raise up tempests, after which follows thundering. *The portion of their cup.* By this word he bears record that God's judgment shall be certain and steadfast, howsoever the ungodly beguile themselves with fallacious self-soothing. This metaphor is often met with in the scriptures. For inasmuch as the flesh believes nothing more reluctantly than that the destructions and misfortunes which seem casual, fall out according to just measure and

proportion by God's appointment; God takes upon him the person of a householder, that deals out to each his portion, or allowance. In this place therefore David means, that there is reward certainly laid up for the ungodly, and that it shall not boot them to strive, when the Lord shall reach them the cup of his wrath to drink; neither that such a cup is prepared for them as they may sip of by drops; but such a cup as they must be fain to drain off all at once, according as the prophet declares, Ezek. xxiii. 34; *thou shalt drain it off, even to the dregs.*

8 *For the righteous Lord.*] He reasoned just now from God's office, that he will punish the reprobate; and now he gathers from his nature, that he will be a helper to the good and righteous. For inasmuch as he is righteous, he sheweth how it is of consequence, that he should love righteousness; for else he would renounce himself. Also it were a cold speculation, to think that righteousness is shut up in God, if it came not also to our minds, that he acknowledges whatsoever is his, and shews proof thereof in the governance of the world. Some take the thing itself for the persons, as if he had said, *men of righteousness.* But the literal sense agrees better, that righteousness is acceptable unto God, and therefore that he favoureth good causes. Whence he concludes, that God regardeth righteous persons. A little before, he had said that God regardeth the sons of men, in another sense; namely, because he will judge of each man's life. But here he means that God vouchsafeth a special care upon the righteous and simple, to defend them with his protection. And this clause shews sufficiently what he meant in the whole Psalm; namely, that all those shall be saved by God's protection, who, leaning upon his grace, do follow righteousness unfeignedly; of which number he himself was one, yea and the very chief of them. Now although this last part, *his countenance alloweth the righteous*, be diversely expounded, yet I doubt not but the natural meaning of it is, that God hath continual regard of the righteous, and never turns his eyes away from them. For it is a constrained sense to say, that the righteous shall see the face of God. But I will not tarry about confuting other men's opinions.

PSALM XII.

David, bewailing the forlorn state of his people, and the utter breach of right order, prays God to rescue them betimes. Again, to the intent to comfort himself and all the godly, after he has mentioned God's promise of helping his servants, he commends his faithfulness and constancy in fulfilling his promises. Whence he concludes in the end, that, even when the world is at the worst, then will he deliver the godly.

[*To the chief chanter upon the eighth. A Song of David.*]

2 Save me, O Lord, for the merciful is waxed scant; and the faithful are wasted away from among the children of men.

3 Every man talketh deceit with his fellow, with the lips of flattery in their heart, and in their heart do they speak.

To the chief chanter upon the eighth.] Respecting this word, eighth, there are two opinions. Some take it to be an instrument of music, and some think rather, that it is a tune; but because it matters not greatly which one choose, I do not trouble myself much about it. Whereas some conjecture it to be the beginning of a song, it seems not to me to carry so good reason with it. Surely it agrees well, that it should be referred to the notes.

In the beginning, David complains that the land was so covered with men that were wicked, and wholly given over to all kind of depravity, that there remained no regard of right and equity, nor any man to defend the good; in short, no feeling or faithfulness more. And it is probable that he denoted the time when Saul persecuted him, because then, both high and low had conspired the destruction of the guiltless and miserable soul. Notwithstanding, it is a horrible thing to be spoken, that righteousness was so utterly overthrown in the elect people of God, that all of them with one consent being set against a good cause, should be carried headlong to outrage and cruelty. For he accuses not foreigners in this place, but he tells us that this flood of iniquity rages even in God's church. Wherefore that the faithful discourage not their hearts in these days at the sorrowful sight of this most corrupt and utterly disordered state of the world; they must consider it is to be borne with patiently, if their case be the same that David's was in time past. And it is to be

noted, that the cause of David's calling upon God for help, because there remained no uprightness among men, is that by his example we may learn to flee to God in the extremity of despair. For this also must be taken for a principle, that the more confused things are in the world, the more is it the especial time with God to preserve us.

2 *The merciful is waxed scant.*] Some suppose it to be a complaint against the unmerited slaughter of the righteous; as if he had said, that Saul had cruelly put to death as many as followed equity and faithfulness. But I take it more simply, that there is no more beneficence or truth remaining among men. And he hath in two words expressed wherein true righteousness consists. For like as there are two kinds of unrighteousness, that is, violence and deceit, so men live righteously when they hold converse in faithfulness, without wrong, and maintain mutual fellowship one with another accordingly; when they be neither lions nor foxes. Notwithstanding, if the confusion which is described here grieve us, we must take heed that we howl not with the wolves, or that the prevailing liberty of wickedness carry us away, but rather that we refer ourselves to the example of David.

3. *Every man talketh deceit.*] In this verse he notes that part of unrighteousness which is contrary to truth. He says, there is no truth or singleness in their talk, because they are bent on deceit. Afterwards he defines the manner; namely, that every man entraps his neighbour with fair speech. Also he points out the well-spring and first cause of it, for that they speak with a double heart. And this double-heartedness, as I may term it, makes men double-tongued and word-wresters. Whence the Hebrews derive the term flattery, חלקות, from division. For as those that purpose to deal faithfully with their neighbours, set open their whole heart as it is; so the false and deceitful persons keep back a part of their meaning to themselves, and cover it with the varnish of dissimulation, so that no certainty can be gathered from their talk. Therefore must our talk be single, that it may be the very image of an upright mind.

4 Let the Lord cut out all the lips of flattery, and the tongue that speaketh great things.

5 Which have said, with our tongues, will we be strengthened; our lips are in our own power: who is our Lord?

To his complaint he annexeth a curse, that God should

cut off deceitful tongues. Now, although it be doubtful whether he wish that deceitful men might be destroyed, or whether he would have them only bereft of power to do harm, yet the context leads us more to the first sense, that God should by some means or other do away with that plague. And whereas passing over their maliciousness, he inveighs against their envenomed tongues; hence we understand how much more harm he felt from these. And surely, falsehood and slander are more deadly than all swords and weapons. But by the second verse it appears more plainly what kind of flatteries they were, whereof mention was made in the last verse before. For some flatter after a slavish and fulsome sort, so as that they are ready to do or to suffer any thing. But here David marks another sort; namely, those who in their flattery do notwithstanding boast themselves proudly, and mingle boldness with their ensnaring arts. Therefore he speaks not of the sordid and plebeian kind of flatteries; but he censures the courtly calumniators, who not only wind themselves in by agreeable arts, but also overwhelm unhappy souls with their full-mouthed extravagances in lying. Which thing he confirms also better in the verse following. For it behoves them to bear exceeding high authority, who resolve that there is sufficient protection for them in lies. And it is the highest point of wickedness, to rise up against a thing with such brazenfaced boldness, that they are nought ashamed to pervert all right and conscience, by their importunate arrogance of tongue. For their conduct is all one, as if they should defy God himself to his face. Whereas some read, *we will strengthen our tongues*, although it may be endured, yet it scarcely agrees with the principles of grammar, by reason of the letter ל which is added. Again, this sense is fitter, that they are so armed with their tongues, that they break forth whithersoever they list, according as this kind of men, distorting all things by their slanders, all but overshadow the sun with darkness.

6 For the spoiling of the needy, for the deep sighing of the poor, will I now rise up saith the Lord; I will set him in safety whom he snareth.

7 The words of the Lord are pure words; silver cast in a principal cup of the earth, tried seven times.

6 *For the spoiling.*] Now David propounds to himself matter of comfort, that God will not suffer the ungodly to make havoc thus without end or measure. But to confirm him-

self and others the more effectually in this doctrine, he represents God himself speaking. For it is of more force when God cometh forward, and declareth with his own mouth, that he is come to be a deliverer to them that are in distress. Also there is a great force in the word *now*, whereby God gives us to understand that our welfare is so laid up in his keeping, that he will not bring it forth at once. For he saith, he hath lain still hitherto, till he was awakened with the troubles and cries of his servants. Therefore, as oft as our enemies shall by their wrongs, extortions, and spoilings, leave us nothing but tears and sighs; let us remember that even then is the time at hand, that God will rise up to judgment. This same doctrine must frame our minds to patience: and it must not grieve us to be accounted among the miserable and needy, of whom God promiseth that he will be the avenger.

In the second part of the verse the interpreters vary: *to set in safety*, some take to import as much as to give or bring welfare, as though the letter ב which signifies *in*, were superfluous. Howbeit, rather there is promised full restitution to such as be oppressed. But that which follows has more difficulty in it. The word פוח signifies sometimes to blow up, sometimes to snare, and sometimes to speak. They that think it to be in this place, to speak, do also disagree among themselves. Some translate it, *God will speak to himself*, that is to say, he will determine with himself; which were a superfluous and vain repetition, because he hath already declared God's decree. And yet more strained is it, that others refer it to any of the godly, as though David represented them talking one to another of God's faithfulness and constancy. For, with this word, they connect the next sentence, *the words of the Lord, &c.* More allowable is the opinion of others, who suppose that unto God's decree there is added a talking to the godly. For it were not enough that God should determine with himself what he will do for our welfare, unless he spake to us direct and by name. For hence, then, shines hope of welfare unto us, when God sheweth by his word, that he will be merciful unto us. He speaketh also, even to the unbelievers, but without any good result, because they are deaf; as also he dealeth bountifully with them, but it boots them not, because they are dull, and devour his benefits without understanding. As for me, because I see that under the word יאמר, promises may well and fitly be comprehended, lest one thing should be read twice, I willingly embrace the meaning which I have set down; namely, that God saith he will rise up to restore those again to liberty, who

seem on all sides entangled and caught in the snares of their enemies; as if it had been said, although the ungodly keep the needy and miserable souls involved as a prey that is caught, yet will I set them in safety. And it is no novelty for the pronoun demonstrative to be taken instead of the relative. If any man like better the word, *blow up*, I do not greatly resist. For by this means would David shrewdly taunt the pride of the ungodly, who think themselves able to do any thing, even with their breath, as is already seen in the ninth Psalm.

7 *The words of the Lord.*] Now commends he God, as sure, faithful, and steadfast in his promises. But in vain would he put in this commendation of God's word by the way, if he had not first called himself and others to meditate on God's promises in their adversities. Therefore, this order of his is to be kept in remembrance, that, after he has declared, how God giveth his servants hope of speedy deliverance in their desperate distresses, now, to the staying up of their faith and hope, he adds, that God promiseth not anything rashly, or in order to beguile. Now, although this seem but a light thing to look to, yet if a man more nearly and heedfully weigh, how forward men's natures are to distrust, and ungodly doubtings, he shall easily acknowledge how advantageous it is for our faith to be sustained by this testimony: that God is not deceitful, nor wheedles us with empty words, nor boasteth immeasurably either of his power or of his goodness, but offereth in word, that which he will perform in deed. Surely there is no man but will protest, that he thinks the same thing in his heart which David writes; namely, *that the words of the Lord are pure.* But those who in the shade and in ease extol God's faithfulness with liberal praises, as soon as it cometh to a serious struggle, although they dare not vomit blasphemies against God openly; yet oftentimes charge him with broken faith. For as soon as he delayeth his help, we challenge his promise, and clamour against him. Therefore, although nothing be more received by the general consent of all men, than that God is true; yet they are but few that soundly subscribe to this his praise in their adversity. And therefore, it it greatly behoves us to cut off the occasion of our distrust: and as oft as any doubt concerning the assuredness of God's promises creeps upon us, it is proper for us forthwith to set this buckler against it, that the words of the Lord are pure. The similitude of silver which he uses here, is far inferior to the worthiness and excellency of so great a thing: but it answers very well to the very limited extent of our understanding. For silver, if it be thoroughly refined, is

had in great estimation among us. But as for God's word, the value whereof is inestimable, we vouchsafe it not like honour; yea, the pureness thereof is less regarded with us than the corruptible metal. Yea, and how many coin dross in their own brain, wherewith to deface or to dim the brightness that shineth in God's word. Many, as though בעליל, which I have translated a cup, were a simple word, interpret it Lord: according to these, the sense should be this: that God's word is like unto most fine silver, which by great running and care is thoroughly purged from all dross, not to serve for any common use, but for the prince of some land. Notwithstanding, I agree rather with the others, who say that ב is but a letter of office, a servile, and teach that עליל is a bright or well polished vessel or cup.

8 Thou, O Lord, shalt keep them; thou shalt preserve him from this generation for ever.

9 The ungodly walk about on every side, when they are exalted; they are a reproach to the children of men.

8 *Thou, O Lord.*] Unto some it seems that he falls again to his prayer, and therefore they translate the words in the optative mood. But I think rather, that David being heartened with boldness, boasts of the assured welfare of the godly, whose keeper God avoweth himself to be, who neither can deceive nor lie. Yet do I not utterly disallow those that think he prays again; but it is improperly wrested to the sayings of God. Surely I doubt not but that David returns to those poor persons of whom he spake before. Whereas he alters the number, that is an ordinary matter among the Hebrews; neither is the sense made doubtful thereby. Therefore these two sayings, *thou shalt keep them*, and *thou shalt preserve him*, signify all one thing; unless peradventure we may say that, in the second place, under the person of one man is expressed the scarcity of good men, which is not at variance with reason, as if he had said, although there remained but one good man alive in the world, yet would he be preserved by the grace and protection of God. But, forasmuch as the Hebrews, when they speak indefinitely, do now and then change the number, I leave it free to the readers to judge. This surely is unquestionable, that by the word *generation* is denoted a great multitude of ungodly persons, and well nigh the whole body of the people. For inasmuch as דור among the Hebrews signifies as well the men that live in any one time,

as the space of time itself, doubtless David in this place means that God's servants cannot otherwise be preserved, than if God defend them against the malice of the whole people, and deliver them from the wicked and froward people of his age. Whence we gather that that age was so corrupt, that David to their reproach binds them altogether, as it were, into one bundle. Moreover it is requisite to call to mind again, that which I have said heretofore; namely, that he speaks not here of foreign nations, but of the Israelites and the chosen people of God; which is worth remarking, lest the immeasurable multitude of the ungodly should discourage us, if at any time there appear a great heap of chaff upon the barn floor of the Lord, and that there lie but a few grains of corn hid underneath. Again, be the number of the good never so small, yet let this persuasion stick fast in our minds, that God will be their keeper, yea, and their continual keeper. For therefore is עולם which signifies *for ever*, added, that we may learn to lengthen out our faith far; because God commandeth us to hope for help at his hand, not once, nor for one day only, but as long as the wickedness of our enemies makes head. Notwithstanding we are warned also herewith, that war is not waged against us for a short time only, but that we must daily stand in the battle. And if so be that God's keeping be hidden, the faithful must patiently abide his leisure, till God rise up; and the greater is the flood that overflows them, so much the more must they hold themselves together in fear and carefulness.

9 *The ungodly walk about on every side.*] סביב among the Hebrews signifies a going round, and therefore some expound it allegorically, that the ungodly beset all passages in suchwise that they besiege good men round about. Others also expound it more subtly, that they indirectly lay ambushes by their equivocations and crooked arts. But I deem the sense to be simple; namely, that they possess the whole land in suchwise, that they range about through all quarters of it; as if he should say, whithersoever he turned his eyes, their bands were ready to encounter him on every side. In the next member he complains that mankind is shamefully oppressed with their tyranny; if at least the disjunction of it be admitted, for here the interpreters disagree. Notwithstanding, this latter plan seems to come nearer the prophet's meaning. Some translate it thus, in one continued tenor: The ungodly fly about everywhere, when the reproaches among the sons of men (that is to say, the worthless, or the offscourings of men) are exalted; which exposition suits tolerably well. For it happens most commonly,

that like as diseases flow from the head into the members, so corruptions flow from princes into all their people. Notwithstanding, forasmuch as the former exposition is more received, and the best learned grammarians teach that זלות is a noun of the singular number, I have followed the same; not because the latter exposition displeases me, but because I must needs choose one of them.

PSALM XIII.

This Psalm has well nigh the same subject with that which went last before; for David being not only pinched with extreme distress, but also overwhelmed with long and manifold miseries heaped one upon another, calls upon God's faithfulness for help, which was the only remedy that remained for him: and at length taking heart, he conceives assured hope of life upon God's promise, even amidst the terrors of death.

[*To the chief chanter. A Song of David.*]

2 How long, O Lord, wilt thou forget me for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

3 How long shall I put counsel in myself? and vexation in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?

2 *How long, O Lord.*] True it is indeed, that David was so sore hated on all hands by reason of false slanders, that nearly all men thought God no less angry with him than Saul and the rest of his enemies were. But here he complains that he is neglected of God, not so much upon the opinion of other men, as from his own feeling. Not that the belief of God's promises was quenched in his heart, or that he leaned not on his grace, but because it cannot but be that when we be pinched a long time with adversities without appearance of any sign of God's help, the thought forces itself upon us, that God hath forgotten us. For it is not after the manner of men, or by the natural sense, that in our miseries we acknowledge God to have regard of us, but we take hold of his invisible providence by faith. So David, so far as might be conjectured by the thing itself, seemed to himself to be forsaken of God. And yet at the same time conducted by the light of faith, the eyes of his mind pierced even unto God's grace, although it were hidden. Therefore when he saw nowhere any ground for good hope, so far as the capacity of man's reason could extend, by compulsion of

grief he cries out, that God regards him not; and yet by the selfsame complaint he witnesses himself to be lifted up higher by faith, so as, contrary to the judgment of the flesh, to resolve that his safety is in the hand of God; or else how should he direct his sighs and prayers to him. Even so must we wrestle with temptations, that in the very conflict, faith may assure us that the miseries which move us to despair are to be overcome; like as the weakness of the flesh hindered not David from seeking God, but he hath excellently united the affections, which to sight are contrary. Moreover it is an improper manner of speech to say, *How long for ever*, but under the same there is conveyed more force, than if he had after the usual manner of speaking demanded, *why so long*, for it intimates that in order to nourish his faith, and encourage himself to patience, he extended his view to a distance. And therefore he complains not of the misery of a few days, as the feeble and pusillanimous are wont to do, which see no more than is before their feet, and quail forthwith at the first push. Wherefore he teaches us by his example, to extend our thoughts afar, that our present grief cut not off our hope.

3 *How long shall I put.*] We know that when the world goes against men, they fret inwardly; and look about here and there to seek remedies; especially are they tortured in their souls and distracted when they see themselves forsaken; and, in great dangers, anxiety and fear compel them to alter their purpose oftentimes, when they see no certain course. David therefore complains that while he is fetching counsel from this side and that, he is wearied to no purpose with such a mass of suggestions, and in joining his daily grief thereunto he points out the well-spring of this unquietness. For like as in painful sicknesses the diseased persons would be changing place every moment; and the more sore the pangs they suffer, the more fitful and eager are they in shifting and changing; even so when sorrow possesses the heart, then are miserable men haled to and fro, and it is more tolerable to them to torment themselves without obtaining relief, than to bear out their troubles with settled and quiet minds. Now, although the Lord hath promised that he will give the faithful the *spirit of counsel*, Isaiah xi. 2; yet doth he not always minister it to them at the first instant, but suffers them to run about as it were in tortuous mazes, or to hang entangled among briers for a time. Some take this word יומם, for *all the day long*. But unto me there seems rather another kind of continuance denoted; namely, that his grief returns every day. In the end of the verse he bewails another mischief; namely, that his adversaries vaunt themselves the more boldly, while they see

him utterly worn out with daily languishing. But of much avail in praying is this consideration: that God can abide nothing less than this unfeeling insolence, when our enemies not only feed upon our miseries, but also rear themselves up so much the more against us, the lower they see us brought.

4 Look back, answer me, O Lord, my God; lighten mine eyes, that I sleep not in death.

5 Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and they that trouble me may rejoice at my fall.

4 *Look back, answer me.*] Forasmuch as the reason why God seems not to succour his servants forthwith is, that he looketh not upon their necessities, David desires God, first to look back; and secondly, to succour him. Truly neither of these things is before or after other in God, but it has been told you heretofore, and oftentimes must be told you hereafter, that the Holy Ghost tempereth the forms of praying to our understanding heedfully. If David had not been persuaded that he was in God's sight, it would not have booted him to cry unto him; but this was the knowledge of faith. In the mean while until God putteth forth his hand to help indeed, the carnal sense suggests that his eyes are shut. Howbeit the manner of speaking imports as much as if he should set God's mercy in the first place, and afterwards join his help to it, because God then heareth us, when taking pity on us he is moved to help us. *To lighten the eyes*, implies as much among the Hebrews as to give the breath of life, for the energy of life appears chiefly in the eyes. In this sense, Solomon, Proverbs xxix, 13; says that the eyes as well of the poor man as of the extortioner are enlightened by the Lord. And when Jonathan fainted for hunger, the sacred history says, that his eyes were overcast with dimness; and again, that after he had tasted of the honey-comb, his eyes received light, 1 Kings xiv. 27; there is commonly a similar metaphor in the word *sleep*, when it is referred to death. However, David in effect confesses that unless the light of life shine on him from God, he shall forthwith be overwhelmed with the darkness of death, and that he is already as good as dead, unless God breathe spirit into him. And hence comes our assurance of life, that though the world threaten us a thousand deaths, yet it is in God's hand to restore us to life again.

5 *Lest mine enemy,*] Again, he rehearses what he had

spoken even now of the pride of his enemies; namely, how it is unbeseeming that God should abandon his servant to the ungodly, to be their laughing-stock. David's enemies stood watching as it were, that they might scoff at his fall. But inasmuch as it is the proper office of God to bridle the frowardness of the wicked, as oft as they glory in their wickedness, David, with good reason requires that they may be kept from such bragging. Nevertheless it is to be noted, that he was well assured of his own integrity; and also that he trusted in the uprightness of his cause, so that it would have been unmeet, and against reason, that he should have been forsaken in danger, and oppressed by his enemies. Wherefore we may then at length pray as he did, when we fight in suchwise under God's governance and auspices that our enemies can not vanquish us, without wickedly triumphing over God himself.

6 But in thy goodness do I trust; my heart shall rejoice in thy deliverance; I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt well with me.

6 Although the prophet feel not as yet how much he hath profited by praying, yet upon trust of deliverance conceived from God's promise, he setteth the shield of hope against the temptations, with the terror whereof he might be stricken through. Therefore, although he be sore vexed, and many cares provoke him to despair, yet he protests that he will stand fast in the trust of God's grace and saving help. And with this selfsame trust it behoves all the godly to be endued and sustained, that they may persevere duly in their prayers. Whence we gather also, as I admonished you before, that by faith we take hold of God's grace, which is hidden from the understanding of the flesh. And although a man may pick out sundry constructions from the sundry tenses of the verbs, yet I doubt not that David testifies that he stood fast in the hope of the promised deliverance, and so would stand unto the end, though never so great a burden of temptations pressed upon him. Therefore in the word *rejoice*, the future tense indicates a continued act, and that this, to wit, *the joy in believing*, shall never be wrested from him by any affliction; and it is to be noted that he places God's goodness foremost in order, as the cause of his deliverance. *I will sing unto the Lord*, this last I refer to the time to come; for although he have not yet obtained his heart's desire, yet, forasmuch as he had no doubt that God was present to deliver him, he devotes himself to

thanksgiving. And certainly it becomes us so to prepare ourselves unto prayer, as therewith to be ready to sing God's praises; which cannot happen unless we be thoroughly persuaded that our prayers shall not be in vain. For although we be not free from sorrow, yet must this cheerfulness of faith arise out of it to dictate to us the song of gladness to come; as David addresses himself to magnify God's grace, before the issue of his adversities is seen. The word גמל, which others translate to *reward*, signifies nothing else here than to bestow a free benefit, as in many other places; for what manner of thanksgiving were it to say that God had paid his servant his due reward. Hence is disproved the fond and trifling captiousness of those that wrest this place to prove the merit of works. Finally, in making haste to sing of God's benefits before he had received them, he set before his eyes the deliverance, which as yet was far out of his sight.

PSALM XIV.

First he describes the wicked contempt of God, to which well nigh all the people had abandoned themselves. And that his complaint may carry the greater weight, he utters it in the person of God. Afterwards he comforts himself and others with hope of redress, which he believes to be at hand from God; although he sighs heavily in the mean while.

[*To David's chief chanter.*]

The fool said in his heart there is no God. They have corrupted, they have done an abominable deed: There is not one that doeth good.

Many of the Jews are of opinion, that in this Psalm is uttered a prophecy concerning the oppression that was to come upon their nation; as though David should in spirit bewail the church of God afflicted under the tyranny of the Gentiles. Therefore what is spoken here, they refer to their present dispersion, as though they were that precious heritage of God, which the wild beasts devour. But it is easily seen that while they would fain hide the shame of their own nation, they unreasonably wrest to the Gentiles that which was spoken of the perverse children of Abraham. Surely there is no fitter interpreter than the apostle Paul, who applies it expressly to the people that were under the law, Rom. iii. 19. Again, although we wanted that record;

yet the context shews plainly, that David denotes rather the household tyrants and enemies of the faithful, than foreigners; a point most important to remember. For we know how severely this temptation tortures us, when we see a foul mass of wickedness working in the midst of the church, good and simple men wrongfully punished, and wicked men cruelly lording it at their lust. For this sorrowful sight makes us almost out of our wits. Wherefore it behoves us much, to be fenced with the example which David sets forth unto us, that in the desperate downfalls of the church, the hope of deliverance may hold us up. I doubt not that in this place is described the confused and forlorn state of Jewry which Saul brought in when he began to rage openly. For then all godliness was faded away, and there was even as little uprightness among men, as if the remembrance of God had been quite quenched. *The fool said*, forasmuch as נבל among the Hebrews signifies not only a fool, but also a froward and naughty person, it had not been amiss to have translated it so in this place. Notwithstanding, I willingly follow that which is more received; namely, that all profane persons should be pronounced mad, who casting away the fear of God, yield themselves over to all unrighteousness. For David blames not his enemies for common foolishness; but inveighs against the phrensy and insane hardihood of those whom the world deems to be very wise. For those that in the opinion both of themselves and of other men, seem to be most skilful and discreet, we see most commonly delve in the depths of craft, that they may exercise the sharpness of their wits in despising and scorning God. First therefore it is to be known, that how much soever the world applaud these subtle and acute men, who allow themselves any extent of license, yet the Holy Ghost condemneth them of foolishness, because there is no dulness more brutish than the forgetting of God. And herewithall it is to be considered whence he gathers, that they have bereft themselves of all feeling of godliness; namely, because they have perverted all order, so that there remains no difference between right and wrong, no regard of honesty, no love of humanity. David therefore, speaks not of the hidden affection of the heart, except so far as the ungodly betray themselves by their own evidence; as if he should say, how happens it that these men run riot so excessively, so that there is no regard of right or equity among them, and finally, that they rush outrageously into all kinds of wickedness, but that, having shaken off the sense of godliness, they have wiped away all remembrance of God out of their minds, as much

as in them lies; for in whose mind soever there dwell any awe of God, they must needs be held in some restraint of modesty from presuming to do what they list. Whence it follows, that when the ungodly pursue their own lust, so stubbornly and wilfully, without any sense of shame, they have shaken off the fear of God. And he says that they speak in their heart; because, although they utter not this accursed blasphemy out of their mouths, yet the unbridled looseness of their life cries out, that their hearts, which are void of all godliness, soothingly sing this song to them. Not that they uphold by drawn out arguments, or formal syllogisms, as they term them, that there is no God at all, for that they may be the more inexcusable, God doth every now and then exercise even the wickedest sort of all with secret compunctions of conscience, so that they are compelled to acknowledge his majesty and sovereign power over them; but because they by their maliciousness partly choke and partly corrupt whatsoever right knowledge God instils into them, so that the fear of God lies prostrate and bereft of life. For although they deny not flatly that there is any God, yet they shut him up in heaven, despoiled of his righteousness and power, which is as much as to set up an idol instead of God. For as though they would never have aught to do with him, they put him far away from every transaction of life. But when God is plucked from his throne, so that he should cease to be a judge, then is wickedness come to its perfect fulness; as it is most truly said by David, that those who carelessly give themselves liberty to do all manner of wickedness uncontrolled, deny God in their heart. Howbeit, forasmuch as Psalm liii. altering but few words, contains nothing but a repetition of this matter, I will shew what difference there is between them in their respective places. Whereas David complains here, that they had done an abominable deed; there, instead of *deed*, is put *iniquity*. And the readers must consider that David speaks not of one deed or two; but as he said, that they had perverted or broken all lawful order so now he adds, that they have defiled their whole life, so that it is become abominable. Of which thing he alleges this proof, because they observe no upright dealing among men, but have forgotten all well-doing.

2 The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that understandeth and seeketh after God.

3 Every man is stept aside, they are altogether

become rotten; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

2 *The Lord.*] It is of more force that God is brought in speaking, than if David had given sentence in his own person. For seeing that God is set in his throne as an inquisitor, we are portentously stupified, if his majesty strike us not with fear. For the habit of sinning makes men to harden in their sins, and to discern nothing, as in a dense mist. David, therefore, to teach them that such flatteries shall profit nothing, affirms, that when wickedness reigns unpunished in the world, then God vieweth and examineth them from heaven, so that it cannot escape him what is doing among men. Now although God have no need to make any inquisition, yet it is not in vain that he taketh upon himself the resemblance of an earthly judge, that, according to our small capacity, we may take hold of his secret providence, which cannot be conceived at once by our understanding. And would to God that this manner of speaking could bring us so far, that we might learn to cite ourselves before God's judgment-seat, and that, while the world is forming schemes of pleasure, and the reprobate are burying their sins by their doltishness, or hypocrisy, or shamelessness, and are blinded in their own drunken wilfulness, this sentence, *that God nevertheless looketh down from heaven*, might shake off our drowsiness. *If there be any that understandeth.* Forasmuch as a course of living well and righteously depends upon being governed by the light of understanding, David did well in the beginning of the Psalm to say, that folly is the root of all wickedness. And in this place he makes a sound mind to be the groundwork of uprightness and virtuous living. But because the greater part pervert their wit to knavery, soon after, David defines true understanding in one word; namely, that it is the seeking of God; whereby he means, that a man's life cannot be ordered aright, unless he give himself wholly unto God. Some men take the word משכיל too strictly; whereas David pronounceth in general, that the reprobate are utterly destitute of all reason or judgment: *Every man is stept aside.* Some translate the word סר *to stink*, that it might assort with the next word, which, with the Hebrews, is to be rotten. But there is no necessity to expound the two words as if one thing were spoken twice; yea, rather it agrees better, that men are condemned of wicked falling from God, because they are estranged, or departed far from him; and that afterwards is noted their corruptness in their whole life, like as the renegades savour of nothing but rot-

tenness; and the Hebrew word is taken almost everywhere in this sense. Again, in Ps. liii. is the word סָג, which signifies the same thing. To be brief, David declares that all men are so carried away with capricious lusts, that there is left nothing sound and uncorrupt in their whole life. This is the universal falling away, which quenches all godliness. Moreover, he censures not a portion, but puts all in the same predicament of guilt. And surely an unhappy portent it was, that all the children of Abraham, who were chosen to be the peculiar people of God, should be so corrupted from the first to the last. But it is asked, how David takes away all exception, that not one righteous person remains, when, nevertheless, a little after he declares that the miserable and afflicted put their trust in God. Again; if all were wicked, who was that Israel, of whose redemption, which was to come, he speaks in the end of the Psalm? Nay, as he himself was one of the body of that people, why does he not at least except himself? I answer, that as he inveighs against the children of Abraham according to the flesh, the slender seed, which God had set apart to himself, is not numbered among them. And this is the reason why Paul, Rom. iii. 10, extends this sentence to all mankind. For although David bewail the wild confusion which existed under Saul, yet doubtless he tacitly compares with God's children as many as are not born anew of the Spirit, but are carried away after the inclination of the flesh. Some give this solution: that Paul urges not the testimony of David; as though he had said, that by nature men are sinful, but that this similitude is put forth, that the heads of the chosen people were wicked, so that it was no marvel that unrighteousness reigned throughout the world. But this solution is too cold; for Paul disputes not there what the greater part of men are, but what all who are led and driven are by their own nature; therefore it is to be noted, that as David opposes himself, and the small remnant of the godly, to all the people, there is put a manifest difference between the children of God, who are formed anew by his Spirit, and all the offspring of Adam, in whom reign corruption and depravity; whence it follows, that every one of us, when we are born, do bring with us this depravity of mind which is described by David, and this filthiness of the whole life, even from our mother's womb, and that we continue such until God make us new creatures again by his secret grace.

1 Are all the workers of iniquity without know-

ledge? Eating up my people, they eat bread, and call not upon the Lord.

This interrogation is added, to express more at large the doctrine above: for whereas the prophet had said, that God marketh men's doings from heaven, and had found all men gone out of the way; now he brings him in exclaiming with amazement, What madness is this, that they who ought to cherish my people, and to ply them with all offices of gentleness, should, without any sense of humanity, rage against them after the manner of wild beasts? And he attributes this person to God, not because anything is strange, or unlooked for to him, but the better to express his indignation. So, also, the prophet, Is. lix. 16. handling, in a manner, the same case, says likewise, that God saw it, and wondered that no man made intercession. Surely, God indeed conceives no such emotions, but he taketh upon him the form and likeness of them, that he may strike us with the greater dread, in saying, that he himself is after a sort troubled with the portentous character of our sins; and if we were not more than stony, we should be abashed, when God sheweth us such a token of his detestation. Moreover, this verse confirms what I said at the beginning; namely, that here foreign tyrants, or the professed enemies of the church, are not spoken of, but the heads of the people, who excelled in power and honour; for this would not apply to men utter strangers to the religion of God, because it were no marvel for those that hold not the rule of life, to despoil by violence. But by this circumstance the indignity is not a little increased, that the very shepherds themselves cruelly devour the flock, and spare not even the people and heritage of God. The like complaint also is to be read in Mich. iii. 1. *Hearken, ye princes of the house of Israel, belongs it not to you to know judgment? But ye flay the skin from my people, and ye tear the flesh from the bones of them, &c.* If they that profess the worshipping of God should deal so cruelly with the Babylonians and Egyptians, yet were their injustice by no means to be excused; but when they feed upon the blood and flesh of the faithful, as it were upon bread, it is such a monstrous iniquity, as may well astound both men and angels; for if they had a particle of sound sense remaining in them, it would restrain them from such frantic folly. It must needs be, therefore, that they are blinded by the devil, so that they are utterly bereft of sense, while, knowingly and voluntarily, they so inhumanly

flay and devour the people of God. And from this place we learn, how displeasing to God, and abominable, is the cruelty which infuriate shepherds exercise against the righteous. In the end of the verse, when he says, that they call not upon the name of the Lord, he again marks the fountain and cause of this wild injustice; namely, that they are utterly untouched with reverence towards God. For religion is the best instructress of what equity requires between man and man, and where zeal for her is extinguished, there all respect for justice is lost. As for calling upon the name of the Lord, as it constitutes the main exercise of piety, therefore, not here alone, but in many places of scripture, it embraces the entire worship of God, by the figure called synecdoche, which puts a part for the whole.

5 There were they brought in great fear; for God is in the generation of the righteous.

6 Ye make a mock at the counsel of the poor; because Jehovah is his hope.

5 *There were they brought in great fear.*] The prophet now encourages himself and all the faithful with that most sweet comfort, that God will not forsake those that are his even to the end, so as not at length to shew himself their avenger. The adverb of place some expound as though God would take vengeance on the reprobate, in the sight of his saints; because it was on them that they exercised their tyranny. But the certainty rather of the punishment they will suffer is denoted, as though he pointed to it with his finger. And yet from Psalm liii. it would seem that the sudden and unlooked for judgment of God is intimated by it; for there it is added, *no fear is,* or *no fear was.* I am aware indeed that this portion of the sentence is variously construed by expositors; for some suppose that what was meant is, *that there was no fear like it;* others refer it to those groundless alarms with which ungodly minds are harassed. For God threatens the transgressors of his law with this torment also, *that they should flee when no man pursueth;* Lev. xxvi. 17. and be *seared at the rustling of a falling leaf;* even as we see that they are themselves their own executioners, and of themselves are agitated with inward tumults independent of any external impulse. But I judge the meaning of the prophet to be different: namely, that when all is tranquil and prosperous, on a sudden God hurls his bolts at them. For when they have cried peace and safety, sudden and astounding destruction impends over their heads. 1 Thess. v. 3. The prophet therefore cheers and

sustains the faithful with this prospect, that the wicked shall be overwhelmed with sudden destruction, while they shall imagine themselves exempt from every peril, and shall be celebrating their triumphs in confidence. The reason is added: because it is God's will to shield the righteous with his protection. Moreover, that he may maintain them unharmed, he must needs hurl his bolts from out of heaven against their unrighteous and outrageous enemies. There is however some ambiguity in the word דור; for as this noun with the Hebrews sometimes signifies an age, or the course of human life, the following sense might be elicited: although God wink at wrongs for a time, yet is he ever present with his servants, and pursues them with his favour through their whole life. The simpler sense however appears to be, that God stands on the side of the righteous; so that דור may have the same import here as the word *natio* sometimes has with the Latins. In Ps. liii. 6. he adds, *Since God hath broken the bones of him that besiegeth thee, thou shalt put them to shame: for God hath rejected them.* In which words the prophet explains more clearly how God protects the righteous; namely, in snatching them from the jaws of death, as though one should deliver from siege those who are reduced to extremity; whence it follows, that we must bear oppression patiently, if we desire to be saved by the hand of God at the proper time. The expression *bones*, is put metaphorically for strength or might, because it would not otherwise appear, as it should, that the wicked are crushed by the hand of God if they were not formidable in power and resources. He then exhorts the faithful to a holy glorying, that they should doubt not but that an ignominious downfal awaits the reprobate: because, forsooth, God hath rejected them; and, if he is opposed to them, all things must needs go ill with them. Because מאס sometimes signifies, *to despise*, some translate it thus; Because God hath despised them; but improperly in my judgment. Rendered them contemptible, or subjected them to disgrace and infamy, would suit better. Whence it follows that they bring nothing but dishonour upon themselves, while they strive to mount up, as it were, in spite of God.

6 *The counsel of the poor.*] He inveighs against those mighty sons of earth who mock at the simplicity of the faithful, while in their distresses they wait in quietness for God their deliverer. And doubtless nothing seems more absurd to the flesh than to take refuge with God when he succours not our calamities: and that, because the flesh estimates God according to the present view of his favour. Therefore being devoid of faith, whenever they see the

children of God overwhelmed with misfortunes, they reproach them for their groundless trust, as it seems to them indeed, and with bitter sarcasms rail at this confidence of theirs, because they recline upon God from whom they receive no sensible aid. And therefore David, in mockery of this insolence, threatens them that this also will be one cause of their destruction; that they charged the poor and afflicted with folly, because, in reliance on the protection of God, they sank not under misfortunes; and at the same time admonishes them that it is the perfection of counsel to depend upon the Lord: and that it is consummate prudence, though we are smitten to the earth, to rest contented in the salvation which he has promised.

7 Who shall give salvation to Israel out of Sion? When the Lord shall have turned the captivity of his people, Jacob shall be glad, Israel shall leap for joy.

7 *Who shall give.*] David having set forth the doctrine of consolation, reverts to vows and moanings. By which he teaches, that although God lets us languish long, yet we ought not to sink with weariness so as not at all seasons to make our boast in him; and then, that the most effectual solace in daily troubles is to repeat our vows continually. Moreover he looks not to the right hand, nor to the left, so that turning his eyes from God alone he should look for another deliverer: but by demanding who shall give salvation, he only expresses the fervour of his longing, as though he had said, When, O when, will the time come that God will put forth his salvation? for by adding the name of Sion, he testifies that his hope is fixed on God; for Sion was a holy place, from which God had promised that he would give ear to the prayers of his servants: Sion was the resting-place of the ark of the covenant, the pledge and symbol of the Divine Presence. He does not therefore doubt who it was that should be the author of his salvation: but with anguish of soul he asks when at length that salvation will go forth which is to be hoped for from no other source than God alone. It is questioned however, how it would be proper that Sion should be named as the sanctuary of God, if this prayer refers to the time of Saul. If any one should prefer, that in the spirit of prophecy David predicted what was not yet visibly realised, I make no resistance. To me, however, it appears probable that this Psalm was composed after the ark of the covenant was deposited in mount Sion. For we know that David employed his leisure in putting upon imperishable record events which had occurred long before.

Howbeit, in desiring that Israel should be delivered, we are taught thereby that he did not think of himself individually so much as he was anxious for the general salvation of the church: which ought to be observed the more heedfully, because, while every man is occupied with his own peculiar sorrow, most commonly the welfare of the body of our brethren is neglected. But God by each man's own adversities, putteth him in mind to turn his care to the body of the whole church, as David includes Israel with himself. *When the Lord shall have turned.* David in these words determines, that God will in nowise suffer the faithful to pine away in continual sorrow, as it is said in another place, cxxvi. 5. *They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy.* For, no doubt, he confirms and encourages himself and all the godly again to hope for the promised deliverance. First, therefore, he says, that although God delay, or at least speed not according to our longing, yet will he defend his servants, and redeem them from captivity. Afterwards he assuages their sorrow, for the joyful end that shall betide it, because it shall at length be turned into gladness. Again; the captivity whereof he makes mention, is not the captivity of Babylon, or the scattering of them among the heathen nations; but rather an oppression at home, when the wicked bear sway, like tyrants in the church. Wherefore we are taught by these words, that when such beasts make havock of God's flock, and scatter it abroad, or proudly tread it under foot, we must flee unto God, whose peculiar charge it is to gather his Israel from the places whither they were dispersed. And the very name of *captivity* teaches us, that when the ungodly pervert due order at their pleasure, then is Babylon or Egypt even in the midst of the bosom of the church. Now then, although David delay the joy of the holy people till the time of their deliverance, yet must this comfort avail us, not only to temper our grief, but also to season it with gladness.

PSALM XV.

This Psalm teaches upon what condition God chose the Jews to be his people, and placed his sanctuary in the midst of them; namely, that they should shew themselves to be his peculiar and holy people, by living justly and uprightly.

[*A Song of David.*]

1 Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle? who shall rest in the hill of thy holiness?

2 Even he that walketh incorruptly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh truth in his heart.

1 *Lord, who shall.*] Because nothing is more rife in the world, than falsely to pretend the name of God, and a large portion of men allow themselves to do this without fear of consequences; David, advisedly leaving men, addresses God himself; intimating that all who should thus misappropriate the title with a deceptive purpose, yet gain nothing by their self-delusion, because God continueth always like himself, and as he is faithful, so will he have faithfulness rendered to him in return. For although he adopted Abraham freely, yet he covenanted that he should live incorruptly. And this is the general condition of the covenant that he made from the beginning with the whole church. The sum is, that the name of God is in vain pretended by the hypocrites who occupy a place in the temple of God, because he acknowledgeth no man for his, if he follow not righteousness and upright dealing all his life long. David saw the temple crowded with a great throng of men that professed the same worship, and presented themselves before God according to the outward ritual. And therefore he assumes an air of wonderment, and turns his talk unto God, who in so confused a medley of men, discerneth his own servants from strangers. This doctrine serves to three uses. For first, if we desire indeed to be counted among the children of God, the Holy Ghost telleth us that we must shew ourselves to be such by integrity of life; because it is not enough to serve God with outward ceremonies, unless we also live virtuously and innocently. Secondly, forasmuch as it often happens that we see God's church defaced with many pollutions, lest any man should dash his foot against this stumbling-block, there is a difference put between those who are permanent citizens of the church, and the sojourners mingled with them for a time. A right needful warning surely, lest, if God's temple be stained with much filthiness, we may be driven to revolt through loathing and waywardness. By filthiness I mean the vices of a foul and corrupt life. For provided religion flourish in purity of doctrine and ceremonies, we must not be so greatly offended at men's faults, that we should therefore rend its unity. But the experience of all ages teaches us, how grievous a temptation it is, when the church of God (which ought to shine clear, and to have all spots wiped out of her), cherishes many hypocrites or wicked persons in her bosom. This was the occasion in times past why the Catharists, Novatians, and Donatists dissevered themselves from the fellowship of the godly.

And the Anabaptists renew the same schism at this day, because they think not that the true church, which tolerates vices. But it is not for nought that Christ, Matt. xxv. 32, challenges to himself the office of separating the lambs from the kids; but rather he admonishes us that evils are to be borne with, until the ripe time of purging do come. Still at the same time the faithful are enjoined, every man to endeavour his utmost that the church may be purged from all corruption. And this is the third use of this doctrine which I have noted. For although God's holy barn shall not be thoroughly cleansed before the last day, when Christ at his coming shall cast out the chaff, still the same is begun now by the doctrine of his Gospel, which he therefore terms a fan; wherefore we must in nowise be sluggish in this behalf, but rather strive vigorously, that as many as have professed themselves Christians, may continue in chaste and pure conversation. But this is chiefly to be borne in mind, that all unrighteous persons are forbidden to come within the sanctuary, and are condemned of profane boldness, for pressing irreverently into the company of the godly. He makes mention of the tabernacle, because the temple was not yet built. The sum however is this, that none have access unto God, save his true worshippers.

2 *He that walketh incorruptly.*] Here is to be noted the implied contrast between the vain vaunting of the title or the naked profession, which consists in ceremonies, and this substantial testimony of godliness, which David commends. Nevertheless it might be demanded, seeing that the service of God takes precedence of the duties of charity, why there is no mention made here of faith and praying, for surely these are the badges whereby it became the lawful children of God to be discerned from bastardly hypocrites. The solution is ready: that David excludes not the spiritual sacrifices of faith and invocation, but inasmuch as the hypocrites commonly vaunt themselves of the multitude of ceremonies, whose ungodliness, notwithstanding, bewrayeth itself in their outward behaviour, while they are full of pride, cruelty, and violence, and given to deceitfulness and extortion,—to the intent that as many as are of that livery may be drawn forth into the light, the trial of the true and incorrupt faith is to be fetched out of the second table of the law. For according as every man uses righteousness and equity with his neighbours, so shews he in very deed that he fears God. David then is not content with political justice, as though it were enough to yield every man that which is his, and yet were lawful to bereave God of his right: but he marks out the virtuous worshippers of God by the fruits of righteousness.

And first he requires incorruptness or singleness of heart, that men should follow their business simply and without evil craft. Secondly, he requires righteousness, that they should endeavour to do good to their neighbours, hurting no man, and abstaining from all wrong. And thirdly, he requires sincerity in their talk, that they speak nothing guilefully or captiously. *To speak in the heart*, is a strong figurative expression, but which better expresses David's meaning than if he had said, *from the heart*. For he denotes such a concord and harmony of the heart and tongue, as that the speech should be the lively image of the inward affection.

3 He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doth evil to his fellow, nor raiseth up slander against his neighbour.

3 After David has briefly comprehended what gifts they ought to be endued with, whosoever covet to have a place in the church, he reckons up certain vices from which it behoves them to be clear. And, first, he tells them they must be no backbiters; secondly, that they must refrain themselves from doing any harm or wrong; and thirdly, that they further not slanders and false censures by their countenance. The rest we shall see afterwards. David, therefore, sets down evil speaking as the first point of unrighteousness wherewith our neighbours are harmed. For if a good name be more precious than much riches, Prov. xxii. 1. there can be no greater harm done unto men, than when their good name is impaired. Nevertheless, here is not condemned every word of reproach, but the disease and lust of backbiting, which stirs up malicious persons to spread abroad slanders. Notwithstanding, it is not to be doubted but the Holy Ghost's meaning is to condemn all false or wicked accusings. The second point, namely, that all unrighteousness ought to be far off from the children of God, has a larger scope; that is to say, that they should not do any harm at all to their brethren: and by the words *fellows and neighbours*, he means not only those with whom we have familiar acquaintance, or alliance, but even all men, as many as are bound and knit unto us by the common bond of humanity. And this he does to make the thing more odious, that the faithful may the more abhor all misdealing, because that whosoever harm another man breaks the bond of human fellowship. In the third member the interpreters agree not. For some take *raising of slander*, to be *to forge*, *devise*, or *invent*, because lewd persons stir up slander upon nothing, and so it would be but a repeating of the sentence

that went before; namely, that the faithful should not take liberty to slander with their tongues. But I suppose there is another vice rebuked, that is to say, overmuch cruelty; by which we either greedily hearken to, or rashly admit evil reports of our neighbours, which we ought rather by all means to suppress; for they that reject false inventions, as it were let them spill upon the ground; but they that spread them abroad, and deliver them, as it were, from hand to hand, are, not unaptly, said to raise them up.

4 Despised in his eyes is the offcast; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord: when he hath sworn to do harm, he changeth not.

The first part of this verse is expounded diversely. Some gather this sense from it; that the servants of God are despicable to themselves, and of no reputation in their own sight; which sense if we admit, then must the copulative be understood, which David expresses not. Now, besides that I see a harsh omission of the conjunction, there is also another reason which leads me to believe that David had another meaning; for he compares two things that are quite contrary to each other; namely, to despise froward and worthless persons, and to honour such as be just and earnest followers of godliness. That these two members may answer one another, I can no otherwise take that which is spoken of disdain, than that the ungodly are despised of the children of God, and receive the reward of reproach which they have deserved. True it is, indeed, that although the faithful live with great praise, yet they are not puffed up with presumption, but rather are dissatisfied with themselves, because they feel how far they come short of perfection. But when I consider what the context requires, I do not think that lowliness or modesty is praised, so much as plain and uncorrupt judgment, where neither the wicked is spared, nor the virtuous defrauded of his due honour; for flattery, which nourishes vices by covering them, is a mischief no less contagious than common. I confess, indeed, that if the wicked be in authority, they are not so to be despised but that we must obey them, so far as the consideration of our duty will allow. Nevertheless, we must take heed that our slavish adulation involve us not in the same guilt with them. For he that not only bears with their vices, but also honours them, shews that he allows them also as much as in him lies. Therefore Paul, Eph. v. 11. teaches that it is a species of wicked fellowship, when we rebuke not men's vices. And surely it is to depart too

much from rectitude, indirectly to mock God in order to gain the favour of men, which they do whosoever frame themselves to please the wicked. And yet David refers not so much to the persons, as to the very faults; for he that sees the wicked honourably treated, and made more determined in their naughtiness by the applause of the world, if he also voluntarily adds his consent, what else does he but attribute the sovereignty to sin? *But woe be unto them that call evil good, and darkness light,* as says Isaiah, v. 20. And that David should put this word *offcasts* for filthy and wicked persons, though they be placed in high degree of honour, must not seem harsh or strained; for if it were lawful for inspectors of entrails and other heathen soothsayers to term wicked and desperate persons by the name of *rejected,* though they excelled in authority and riches, as Cicero affirms in his book concerning the answers of the aruspices, why should not then the heavenly prophet reckon among the dishonoured, as many as be cast off by God? The sum therefore is, that God's children freely judge of every man's deeds, and are not bowed to unprincipled flattery by favour, that they may uphold the wicked in their naughtiness. And it is no mean virtue which follows next; namely, to honour the godly and righteous; for as they are often, as it were, the refuse of the world, it frequently happens that those who are friends to them, everywhere procure themselves the hatred of the world. Therefore the greater number refuse the friendship of good men, and suffer them to lie despised, which cannot be without sore and heinous wrong to God. Let us learn, then, not to value men by their substance, or their money, or their transient honours, but to have godliness in estimation. And surely no man shall ever set his mind to the study of godliness, but he that reverences the servants of God; like as also the reverencing of them stirs men up to follow their steps. *When he hath sworn, to do harm.* The Greek translation would agree very well, were it not for the points; which, although the Hebrews were never without, yet it is probable they did not always express them in writing. Notwithstanding, I will follow the usual reading. The meaning therefore is, that the faithful will rather incur loss than go from their word; for it is no trial of faithfulness where a man abideth by his promise because he sees it is for his own profit. But nothing is more common than to seek pretence from some light loss to break covenants when men have promised anything one to another. Each man weighs severally what is for his own profit; and if it grieve him to stand to his promise, he ingeniously discovers that there is a great deal more loss than

is to be feared. It seems, indeed, a fair excuse, when a man makes his moan that he shall suffer great loss if he start not from his covenant. Hence grows that great liberty among men, that they think themselves bound to keep promise no longer than is for their own behoof. David, therefore, condemning that fickleness, requires a different kind of constancy in the children of God. Here, now, arise questions. If you promise a murderer a piece of money to save your life, and thereupon he let you go, whether you ought to perform your promise. Again; if a man has been cruelly cheated, whether it is lawful for him to break his oath. As touching the murderer, he that shall bring him money will run into another vice, because he will with his own resources cherish a common enemy of mankind, not without hurt to the common weal. Neither does David drive the faithful to such necessity, but only bids men prefer their promises to their private advantage; especially if they be bound with an oath. When a man has sworn through fraudulent circumvention, he ought to set such a value on the sanctity of the name of God, that he will rather patiently bear loss than violate his oath. Notwithstanding, so he be not led by regard for his own private profit, it shall be lawful for him to detect the deceit that was wrought against him. Also there is no reason to the contrary, but that he may, in the spirit of meekness, compromise the matter with the adverse party. Many of the Hebrew interpreters improperly restrain this place to vows, as though David exhorted the faithful to fulfil their vows, as often as they shall have promised to humble themselves with fasting. Than which nothing is further from David's meaning; for he treats only of the second table of the law, and of upright dealing between man and man.

5 He putteth not forth his money to usury, nor taketh bribes upon the guiltless. He that doeth these things shall not be moved for ever.

In this verse David enjoins the faithful, not to oppress their neighbours with usury, nor to be corrupted with bribes to favour unrighteous causes. As to the first member, because David seems to condemn all usuries in general without exception, the name of it has been detestable in all places. But as subtle men have forged specious pretences for themselves, thinking to escape by that artifice, they have plundered with greater excess than if they had followed usury openly, and in the face of the world. But God will in nowise be dealt with by sophistry and counter-

feit colours; but he looks simply upon the thing itself. Wherefore there is no worse kind of usury, than an unjust manner of bargaining, where uprightness is not observed on both sides. Be it known then, that all bargains, wherein the one party seeks his gain wrongfully by the loss of the other party, are condemned, with what name soever they are clothed. Notwithstanding, it is demanded whether all manner of interest is included in this place. If they are irrespectively condemned, it is to be feared that many, thinking themselves brought into such a strait that, which way soever they turn, sin besets them on all sides, will become the bolder from mere despair, and cast themselves headlong into it without stopping to choose. Again, as soon as any thing shall be granted, many will give themselves a loose rein, believing that license is granted them to follow usury without measure. First, therefore, I would that the readers should take heed that they do not exert their ingenuity in catching at pretences of deceit; nor imagine that anything is lawful for them which is grievous and hurtful unto others. Now then, as concerning usury, there is scarcely any usurer to be found in the whole world, who is not at the same time an extortioner, and given to unlawful and filthy lucre. And therefore, not without good cause did Cato in old time place usury and murder on nearly the same level, because it is the purpose of such kind of people to suck other men's blood. For it is a very unmeet thing, that while all other men get their living laboriously, as husbandmen weary themselves with daily work, handicraftsmen serve others with the sweat of their brow, and merchant-men not only busy themselves with labours, but also undertake many inconveniences and dangers; moneymongers alone, sitting still, should take tribute of every man's labours. Besides, we know that for the most part it is not the rich sort that are drained dry by usury, but men of scanty substance, who rather were to be relieved. Wherefore, not without cause hath God, Levit. xxv. 25. forbidden usury, adding this reason; *If my people happen to be brought low, thou shalt not grieve him with usury.* We see that the law was made to the end that men should not cruelly oppress the poor, who were worthy to be pitied rather. Now although the law, which God gave to the Jews peculiarly, was their political law, yet this principle of fairness, that we should not devour such as are miserable and bare, is common to all nations and ages. Whence it follows, that under unlawful usury is not comprehended the gain that a man makes of the loan of his money without the hurt of any party. Also the name of נשך, which David

uses, being derived from *biting*, declares sufficiently that usuries are condemned so far forth as they draw with them a license to rob and plunder. Surely Ezek. xviii. 17. and xxii. 12. seems to condemn any kind of increase. Notwithstanding, there is no doubt but he had respect to wrongful and tricking methods of gaining, wherewith the rich devoured the needy. It comes to this; if the rule of uprightness, which Christ prescribeth, Matt. vii. 12. be graven in our hearts, so that every man do to his neighbour as he would be done unto himself, there is small need of long disputation on usury. That which follows in the text properly pertains to judges, who for hire pervert all right and laws. Nevertheless, it may be extended further, because it often happens that private men also are corrupted with rewards, to defend evil causes. David therefore comprehends in general all corruptions, wherewith we are led from truth and right. Some think, that the rapacity of judges, is denoted, when they force guiltless persons to pay for their deliverance, whom they ought to have helped freely. But it appears by a like place of Ezekiel's, that the meaning is otherwise. *He that doeth these things.* This clause warns us again, that all are not continual citizens of Jerusalem who thrust themselves into the sanctuary; but that the hypocrites, and as many else as vaunt themselves untruly of the title of holy men, shall be cast out with Ishmael, whom they resemble. That which in Psalm xlvi. David attributes to the whole church, applies here to every one of the faithful. The reason expressed there is, that God dwelleth in the midst of Jerusalem. And we know that he is far off from the false and wicked, who approach him hypocritically with their mouth and lips only.

PSALM XVI.

In the beginning David commends himself to God's protection; and afterwards, from meditating on his benefits, he kindles himself to thanksgiving. And although he lend nothing to God by his worshipping, yet he devotes himself to him alone, and protests that he will in nowise meddle with superstitions. Also he alleges a reason, because full and substantial happiness is, to rest upon God alone, who suffereth his servants to want nothing.

[*David's Mictham.*]

On the word *Mictham*, there is disagreement even among the Hebrew interpreters. Some derive it from כתם, as if it were a golden crest. Others think it the beginning of some

ballad, then famous and well known. Unto others it seems rather to be a kind of tune; to whom I give my consent. Soon after follows; *Keep me, O God; in thee do I trust.* It is a prayer whereby he commits himself to God's protection. Neither does he here, as in many other places, call upon God for help in some certain danger; but he desires him to become his keeper all his life long; even as we are not safe otherwise than under his protection, neither in life nor in death. That which follows concerning trust, imports as much as if the Holy Ghost should by the mouth of David assure us, that God is ready to help us all, provided we rest upon him with sure and steadfast faith; and that he taketh not any under his protection, but such as betake themselves to him with all their heart. At the same time we should take warning that by whatever storms of adversity David was buffeted he stood fast, sustaining himself on this faith.

2 Thou shalt say unto the Lord, thou art my Lord, my well-doing is not unto thee.

3 Unto the saints on earth, and unto the notable men; all my delight is in them.

1 *Thou shalt say.*] David protests that he is able to bestow nothing upon God, not only because God wanteth not anything, but also because no mortal is able to purchase God's favour by his service. Meanwhile, however, he gathers courage, and because God is pleased with our dutifulness, he professes himself one of his servants. And to encourage himself the more effectually to this duty, he addresses himself to his own soul. For the Hebrew word is of the feminine gender, which agrees not but with the soul. If any man like better to read it in the time past, *thou hast said*, I will not gainsay him; because he treats of the continual feeling of his soul, as if he had said: I am fully persuaded and assured in myself, that there redounds no profit or fruit to God by me. Nevertheless, I will join myself in fellowship with the saints, that we may worship him together with the sacrifices of praise. Now then, there are two things distinctly laid down in this place: first, David acknowledges that God, of his own right, may exact all things at the hands of us, whom he holdeth wholly bound unto him. For by yielding lordly authority unto him, David declares, that he, and all that he hath are his, and he confesses his own neediness. Howbeit the interpreters expound this latter member two ways. For as עליך may be

translated *upon thee*, some elicit this sense; that God is not charged by any benefits, or well-doings of ours, so as to be anything in our debt; and they take the name of well-doing passively, as if David should affirm, that whatsoever is bestowed upon him by God, proceeds not from any obligation or desert of his own. But in my judgment, the sentence has a larger scope; namely, that though men employ themselves never so busily upon God, yet can they do nothing for him; verily, because whatsoever is in our hand reaches not unto him; not only because he wanteth not anything, since he is all-sufficient in himself alone; but also because we are devoid and in want of all good things; neither have we anything wherewith we may be liberal towards him. From this doctrine, however, will follow what I have touched on before, that God can by no services be bound as a debtor to men. The drift is this, that when we come to God, we must lay aside all presumption. For if we surmise anything to be in our own power, it is no marvel though he shake us off, because we pluck the chief part of his honour from him. But if we acknowledge our services to be as nought-worth of themselves, and worthy of no estimation, this lowliness is as a perfume of sweet smelling, that shall procure them grace and favour.

3 *Unto the saints that are on earth.*] Almost all men with one consent take this place as though David added, that the only way to worship God aright is to endeavour to do good to his holy servants. And, indeed, because no benefits of ours reach to God, he appointeth the faithful in his stead, on whom to exercise our charity. Men therefore then serve God aright when they are beneficial one to another. And although our charity must extend itself even to the unworthy also; *likeas our heavenly Father suffereth his sun to arise upon the good and the bad;* Matt. v. 45. yet doth David worthily prefer holy men, and place them in higher degree. Now though I deny not that this doctrine is comprehended under these words of David's; yet notwithstanding I suppose he goes further; namely, that he will acquaint himself with the devout worshippers of God, and be a companion of theirs, even as it behoves all the children of God to be joined together in the bond of brotherly unity, that they may serve their father with the same one affection and zeal. Now we see that David, after he had acknowledged that he finds nothing which he may bring to God, to whom he oweth all things, doth therefore set his mind upon the saints, because God will be praised by the congregation of the faithful in the world, whom he hath adopted to this end, that they should live all of one mind under his auspices, and

under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. This place therefore teaches us, that there is no sacrifice more acceptable to God, than when we set our minds earnestly upon the fellowship of the faithful; so that being knit together in the holy bond of godliness, we may exercise brotherly good-will one to another. This is the communion of saints, which separates them from the heathenish defilings of the world, that they may be the holy and peculiar people of God. And he speaks of the saints on earth expressly, because God's will is that, even in this world, there should remain conspicuous marks of his glory, whereby to bring us unto himself. And therefore the faithful bear the image of him, that by their example they may stir us up to mindfulness of the heavenly life. The same is the cause also that he calls them *notable*, or *great doers*, because nothing ought to be so precious unto us as righteousness and holiness in which the brightness of his Spirit shineth; like as the last Psalm commanded us to set much by those that fear God. Wherefore we must with all earnestness reverence the pure worshippers of God, so as to esteem nothing more than to unite ourselves to their company, which will then come to pass when we advisedly consider what is true excellency and dignity, and the vain glittering and deceitful pomps of the world dazzle not our eyes.

4 Their sorrows shall be multiplied which offer to a stranger; I will not offer their offerings of blood, nor take up their names in my lips.

Now he defineth the manner of keeping brotherly agreement with the holy men, protesting that he will have nothing to do with the unbelievers and the superstitious. For we cannot otherwise grow together into the one body of the church under God, than by breaking off all ungodly connections, by separating ourselves from idolaters, and by setting ourselves clear and free from all defilements, which corrupt and mar the pure service of God. Sure I am, that this is the drift of David's counsel, but the interpreters disagree in the words. For some translate עצבות, *idols*, so that the sense would be, that after foolish men have once begun to make new gods to themselves, there is no limit to their folly, till they heap up an immeasurable crowd of gods. Notwithstanding, because this noun is put in the feminine gender, I keep still the signification of *sorrows*, or *troubles*, although that the sense may still be manifold. To some it seems to be an imprecation, as though David, fired with a holy zeal, should wish that God's just vengeance

might fall upon the superstitious. Others, whose opinion I prefer, alter not the future tense of the verb, but yet seem not to me to express plainly what manner of troubles David means. They say, that wretched men continually supply themselves with new inventions, in which they miserably torture themselves. But I think that at the same time is noted their end also; namely, that they not only fret themselves unprofitably, but employ their hapless and unblest efforts to their own destruction. For, to withdraw himself the further from their company, he takes this as an admitted principle, that they so utterly fail in their object by their fond superstitions, that by their strenuous exertions they involve themselves from time to time in more grievous miseries. For what shall betide those wretched men, who willingly yield themselves bondslaves to the devil, but to be disappointed of their hope: even as God complaineth in Jer. ii. 13; *They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed themselves out dry cisterns, which are so full of holes that they can hold no water.* In the next member also there is some ambiguity. The word מהר among the Hebrews, in the conjugation *Kal*, signifies to endow, or to give. But forasmuch, in the conjugation *Hiphil*, it is often taken for to run, or to make haste, many have adopted this latter interpretation, that superstitious persons eagerly gad after strange gods. And surely we see them run headlong like frantic persons; and the prophets often upbraid them with this importunate zeal. Therefore I could well away with this sense, if the ordinary acceptation of the language admitted it; but as the grammarians note, that there is not any other similar place *to* be met with, I have followed an other sense in the translation. The grand conclusion is; that while the unbelievers spend and waste their substance, they not only lose whatsoever they offer to their idols, but also overwhelm themselves with new troubles from time to time, by provoking God's wrath against themselves. Perhaps also the prophet alluded to the common doctrine of the scripture; namely, that idolaters make covenants with their idols, by breaking their promise of spiritual wedlock with God. For Ezech. xvi. 33. not without cause, upbraids the Jews, that whereas the lover allures the harlot with gifts, they offered rewards to the idols to whom they prostituted themselves. Nevertheless the simple sense suits very well, that the unbelievers, by bedecking their false gods with gifts, not only loose their cost, but also heap sorrow upon sorrow, because at last, the end will be unhappy. *I will not offer the offerings.* By these sacrifices of blood, some understand things gotten either by bloodshed

or by extortion. But as the prophet inveigheth not here against cruel and bloodthirsty men, but condemns generally all unauthorised and faulty worship, and afterwards names not sacrifices simply, but expressly refers to the rite of libation, I doubt not at all but that he tacitly opposes the offering of blood, to the ceremony of the law. For we know how it was forbidden the people of old time to taste blood, as well in their common food, as in their sacrifices, that they should the more abhor all slaughter and cruelty. Again, histories bear witness that the heathen were wont to offer blood in their sacrifices. David therefore protests, that he will not only have nothing to do with the wicked ways of the idolaters, but also that he will take care to give no outward consent in his behaviour. To the same purpose answers that which follows immediately after, *I will not take their names in my lips.* For he says, he will so hate and abhor idols, that he will shun the naming of them as a most heinous treason against God. Not because it is unlawful to utter their names which frequently occur in the prophets, but because David could not otherwise express the exceeding great loathsomness which the faithful must bear towards false gods; as again appears by that form of speech which he uses; for he sets down the relatives alone, and suppresses the idols themselves. Thus by his example he teaches the faithful not only to shun errors and wicked opinions, but also to abstain from all appearance of consent. For it is manifest that he speaks of the outward worshipping, which is a witness either of pure or of false religion. But if it be not lawful for the faithful to shew any token of consenting with the superstitious; there is no good reason why timorous Nicodemuses should allow themselves that frivolous pretext, that they cherish secret faith within them, while they join themselves to the profanation of the papists. Some expound these words *strangers,* and *their names,* as spoken of the worshippers of false gods; but in my judgment David means the false gods themselves. For his drift is this; that although the earth be overflowed with a torrent of superstitions, and the unbelievers are out of all measure lavish in decking their idols, yet, to the godly and holy, all they invent is an abomination.

5 The Lord is part of my portion and of my cup; thou upholdest my lot.

6 The meet lines are fallen to me in fair grounds; verily, I have a goodly heritage.

5 *The Lord is.*] Here he expresses his mind more clearly.

For he shews the cause why he withdraws himself from idolaters, and will continue in the church of God; and again, how he shuns with abhorrence all participation in their errors, and cleaves to the true worship of God; namely, because he rests upon the only true God: and it is because men are without the true knowledge of God, that, with miserable restlessness blinded, they run to and fro like maniacs. And surely it cannot fall out otherwise, but that they must often stagger who are not grounded upon God, and who hold not the right faith, to keep themselves within the bounds thereof, so as not to be carried away with the torrent of error. But this place teaches, that they only are taught aright in true godliness who hold themselves contented with the one God. For David, by calling God the portion of his lot, his inheritance, and his cup, declares himself to be so fully contented with him, that he covets not anything besides him, nor is excited by any vicious longings. Let us learn, then, so to embrace God, when he offers himself to us, that we may seek all the parts and fulness of our welfare in him only. For it is certain that all the superstitions that ever reigned in the world sprang out of this fountain; namely, that one God hath not been enough for the superstitious. But surely we have no interest in him, unless he be the portion of our lot; that is to say, unless he have us wholly, so that no thought of unbelief trouble us any more. Therefore, when he accuses the backsliding Jews of gadding after idols, *let them, let them,* saith he, *be thy portion.* By which he shews that God gives place to the idols, if he alone suffice us not. And David brings forward three similitudes; first, he compares God to a heritage; secondly, to a cup; and, thirdly, he makes him the maintainer of a possession. Wherein he alludes to heritages, which we know were so divided by God's appointment among the Jews, as that the law commanded each man to hold himself contented with his lot. Furthermore, under the term *cup,* is designated either the revenue, or lands of inheritance; or else, by the figure synecdoche, ordinary meat and drink, as if he had said, that God is his, both by ownership and by increase. Neither is the third comparison in vain; inasmuch as it often happens that the rightful owners are put out of their possession, because no one defends them. But God hath given himself for an heritage unto us in suchwise, that by his power we enjoy him securely for ever. For it is of little service for us to have obtained him once, unless he continues to maintain our possession against the daily assaults of the devil. The exposition of some, *Thou art my ground, wherein my portion lieth,* appears to me cold.

6 *The meet lines are fallen to me.*] He confirms further what he has spoken already in the last verse; namely, that he rests in the one God with a peaceable and quiet mind; or rather so glories, that he looks down with proud disdain upon whatsoever the world imagines desirable without him. For by magnifying God in such honourable strains, he denies that he covets anything more. And the use of this doctrine is manifold, for it ought to withdraw us not only from all the figments of superstitions, but also from all enticements of the flesh and the world. Therefore, as often as things creep upon us which may lead us away from the one God, let them be confronted by this sentiment, That glorious is our lot, since He, who comprehendeth within himself the absolute consummation of all felicity, has given us full enjoyment of himself. So shall it come to pass that our condition shall always be sweet and pleasant unto us, because he who possesses God wants nothing that is necessary to make life blessed.

7 I will praise the Lord, which giveth me counsel; even in the nights do my reins instruct me.

Last of all, David confesses that his coming in possession of so great a good by faith, was also the gift of God's mere grace. For it were to no purpose for God to offer himself to us, unless we freely received him by faith, seeing he calleth unto him both the reprobate and the elect in common, but the former bereave themselves of so great good by their own unthankfulness. Let us know then that both of these things proceed of God's free gift; as well to possess him by faith, as also that he is our heritage. The counsel that David speaks of, is this; namely, the inward enlightening of the Spirit, that we through the blindness of the flesh should not refuse the salvation to which he calls us. Whence we gather that God's grace is mangled no less unskilfully than profanely, when the accepting or rejecting of it is placed on man's uninfluenced will. It appears clearly by the very words, that he treats not here of outward teaching, inasmuch as he says he is instructed in the nights, when he is removed from the sight of men. Afterwards, when he says it is done in his reins, there is no doubt but he points to secret inspirations. Now, as to his assertion that it is done in the nights, mark well the plural number. For David not only ascribes the beginning of faith to God, but also acknowledges himself to profit continually in his school, according as it is necessary for us to have the vanity of our mind corrected all our life long, and the light of faith to be

made to shine more clearly, that by every means we should be advanced higher in the attainment of spiritual wisdom.

8 I have set the Lord continually before me; because he is on my right hand, I shall not be moved.

9 Therefore is my heart glad, my tongue rejoiceth; yea, and my flesh also dwelleth in assurance.

8 *I have set the Lord.*] Again he proclaims his faith; for to set God in one's sight, is nothing else than to hold all his senses, that they should not break away towards any other object. A man must have other eyes than the eyes of the flesh to see him, for he seldom appears unless we soar above the world. Nevertheless, faith stays us, that we turn not our backs upon him. The meaning therefore is, that David was so intently and steadfastly fixed on the providence of God, that he was assuredly persuaded he would be ready at hand to help him as often as he were driven to any strait. He adds also *continually*, that we may know how he leaned perpetually on God's help, that, though harassed with sundry encounters, no fear could make him cast back his eyes anywhere else. And it behoves us so to hang upon God, that we may certainly believe, that though he seem never so far off from us, yet is he near at hand unto us. This manner of beholding will bring to pass that we shall not be deceived with the vain phantoms of this world, *Because he is on my right hand.* I read this second member separately from that which went before; for whereas others unite them thus, *I have set the Lord in my sight because he is at my right hand*, seems frigid, and it greatly abates the force of the doctrine; as though David should say, he measures God's presence by experience, which is far from proper. In my judgment, therefore, it was a full sentence, that he set God before his eyes that he might repair unto him in all perils. Again; that he may be the more encouraged to hope well, he sets before himself how much God's help and fatherly care may avail him; namely, that he maintains in a firm state his servants with whom he is present. Therefore he is regardless of all dangers, and promises him assured safety, because he beholds God with the eyes of faith as though he were present. Moreover, this place overthrows that fiction of the Sorbonists, *that the faithful are in doubt of final perseverance*, for David manifestly extends his trust in God's grace to the time to come. And sure it were a wretched state, to tremble at every moment, as though we had no assurance of the continual progress of God's grace.

9 *Therefore my heart is glad.*] In this verse he commends the incomparable fruit of faith, whereof the scripture makes mention everywhere; namely, that we live under God's protection, not only quietly but joyfully and cheerfully. We know that the chief, the grand essential of a happy life is tranquillity of mind; as nothing is more miserable than to be tossed amidst sundry anxieties and alarms. But how much soever the ungodly besot themselves with the spirit of phrensy or lethargy, yet they never enjoy true mirth nor unruffled peace of mind; but rather feel tumultuous emotions within themselves, which torment them from time to time, and force them to shake off their drowsiness. Finally, it happens to no man to be serenely joyful but to him that hath learned to rest upon God alone, and to lay up his welfare in his hand. Therefore, when innumerable troubles besiege us on all sides, let us know that the only remedy is to lift up our eyes unto God; and then will faith not only pacify our minds, but also shed abroad in them the fulness of joy. Though David not only affirms that he rejoices inwardly, but also makes his tongue, yea and his flesh also, partners of this joy. And with good reason: for the godly not only cherish spiritual gladness in the secret affection of their heart, but also utter it with their tongue; in so far as they boast that God is the guardian of their welfare. I doubt not but the word כבוד, which properly signifies glory, is taken here for the tongue, as in Genesis xlix. 6; for otherwise the division of the sentence into three members would not suit. Now, although the body be not free from inconveniences and troubles; yet, as God defendeth our bodies as well as our souls, it is not unadvisedly that David communicates this benefit of dwelling in safety to his flesh also.

10 For thou shalt not leave my soul in the grave; neither shalt thou put thy holy one to see the corruption.

He proceeds in unfolding the former doctrine; namely, that he wants nothing to complete the measure of his gladness, because he is not afraid that he shall utterly perish. Whence it follows, that no man trusts in God indeed, but he who takes such hold of the salvation promised him by God, that he despises death. And it is to be noted, that David speaks not here precisely of any one certain kind of deliverance, as in Psalm xlix. 16; *he hath redeemed my soul from the hand of the grave*, and in others similar, but conceives assured confidence of eternal salvation, which shall set him

free from all inquietude and fear: as if he had said he should always have ready passage out of his grave, so that he should not abide in corruption. For God by delivering his servants from any danger prolongs their life but for a short time; but what slender and empty comfort were it to have a brief respite, and afterwards to be swallowed up by death without hope of recovery. Hence it follows, that David spake thus because he advanced himself above the common state of mankind; for inasmuch as sentence is given upon all the offspring of Adam, *That dust they are, and into dust they shall return*, Gen. iii. 19; all men, without exception, are bound to abide it; wherefore, unless Christ go forth, who is the first-fruits of them that rise again, they shall lie in corruption for evermore: whence with good reason Peter gathers, Acts ii. 30; that David could not have boasted thus but by the spirit of prophecy, and except he had had an eye to the author of life who was promised to him, who only was to be honoured with this prerogative. Nevertheless this prevented not David from lawfully assuring himself of exemption from death, because Christ by his rising again purchased immortality, not for himself individually, but for us all in general. And whereas Peter, Acts ii. 30; and Paul, xiii. 33; affirm that this prophecy was fulfilled in the person of Christ alone, take it thus; that he was utterly and wholly exempted from corruption in his grave, that he might by degrees, and according to every man's measure, call his members into his fellowship. For seeing that David's corpse was reduced to dust, the apostles justly conclude that he was not privileged from corruption. The same argument extends to all the faithful, of whom no one becomes partaker of incorruptible life without passing through corruption. Whence it follows, that the fulness of life which remains in that head alone, doth shed down into the members but by drops, or piecemeal only. Notwithstanding, the same might likewise be raised concerning Christ, who also descended into the grave. But it is easily answered; provided the etymology of either word be considered. For the grave is called שאול, as an insatiable gulf that consumeth all things, and it is called שחת, from corruption. Wherefore it is not so much the place that is noted here, as the quality of the place, as if it had been said, that Christ's life should be free from the power of death, because his body shall not be subject to corruption, no not even when it is dead. Again; we know that Christ's grave was bedewed with the life-giving perfume of his Spirit, so that it was to him the gate to immortal glory. I confess that the ancient interpreters, as well Greek as Latin, have drawn these words to an opposite sense; namely, that

Christ's soul was brought again from hell: but it is better to continue in the natural simplicity of the former, lest we become a laughingstock to the Jews; and, further, lest one subtilty engendering many other, should drive us into a labyrinth. Certainly, in the second member, there is without doubt mention made of the body, and we know that nothing is more rife with David than to repeat one thing twice. And although we translate the word נפש, into Latin, *anima*, that is to say, *soul;* yet among the Hebrews it signifies nothing else but the breath of life, or the life itself.

11 Thou shalt make the way of life known unto me; fulness of joy is in thy countenance, in thy hand are pleasures evermore.

He confirms the meaning of the last verse, and explains how God shall set him free from death; namely, because by his guiding he shall assuredly come to life. Whence we gather again, what I said before, that the faithful are distinguished here from aliens and reprobates, in respect of the everlasting state. For if any man say that the way of life was shewn unto David, inasmuch as the time of his life was prolonged, it is a mere cavil. For God's grace is made too light of, if we say he is the guide of life to his servants but for a few years. For after this rate they would differ nothing from the castaways, who enjoy the light of the sun as well as they. But, if David commend here God's peculiar grace, which he vouchsafeth to none but his children, doubtless this shewing of the way of life is extended to a blessed immortality; yea, rather that man holds the way of life who is so united to God that he lives in him, and not without him. Afterwards he adds, that where God's favour is, there wants nothing to the full measure of happiness. And although God's countenance may be taken as well passively, as actively for the sight of him, yet I embrace both at once; because, in causing gladness, his fatherly favour presides in order, while he beholdeth us with complacent countenance; nor indeed does he cheer us, until we on our side see his adorable face; yea, and by this member it was David's purpose to express precisely to whom the pleasures belong, whereof there is full store laid up in the hand of God. For, seeing God hath in his hand sufficient pleasures wherewith to satisfy the whole world, how comes it to pass that a dismal and funereal darkness dims the greater part of mankind, but because God looketh not upon all men alike with complacent and fatherly eyes, nor openeth all men's eyes to seek for matter of gladness, no-

where in him. Moreover, the fulness of joy is contrasted with the evanescent enticements of the world; which, after they have mocked wretched people for a time leave them fasting and hungry in the end: for although they glut themselves neversomuch with pleasures, yet are they rather wearied with loathing than satisfied with fulness. Furthermore, worldly delights vanish away like dreams. David therefore avouches that substantial joy, wherein men's minds may repose themselves, is nowhere to be found but in God alone; and therefore, that the faithful only, which are contented with his grace alone, are in all respects perfectly blessed.

PSALM XVII.

This Psalm contains a sorrowful complaint against the cruel pride of David's enemies. Afterwards he protests, that it is beyond his deserts that he is thus inhumanly vexed, because he has given them no cause for their ferocity. At the same time he calls upon God for help, that he may be delivered by his hand. And although the title shews no time, yet notwithstanding it is likely that David complains here of Saul and his followers.

[*A Prayer of David.*]

1 Lord hear my righteousness, give heed to my cry; hearken to my prayer, which is not in deceitful lips.

2 Let my judgment proceed from the presence of thy countenance; let thine eyes look upon mine upright dealings.

In the commencement he alleges the goodness of his cause, because God hath promised that he will in nowise suffer the guiltless to be oppressed, but will at length succour them. For whereas some expound the term *righteousness,* to signify his righteous prayer, it seems to me to be frigid. Rather, David, conceiving confidence in his own integrity, sets God as an umpire between himself and his adversaries, to take cognisance of the case. For we have seen heretofore, that when we have to deal with froward people it is lawful for us to protest our innocence before God. But as it would not be enough for the faithful to have clear consciences, he adds prayer to it in the second place. For it often happens, that even heathenish people justly boast of their good causes; nevertheless, because they acknowledge not

the world to be governed by God's providence, they sink down in that theatre of their own conscience, as they term it, and biting the bit, bear their wrongs rather stubbornly than steadfastly, because they seek no comfort out of faith and calling upon God. But the faithful not only rest upon the goodness of their cause, but also commit the same to the defence of God, and flee unto him as often as any adversity happens unto them. This therefore is the meaning of the text; that as God knoweth David to have performed his duty rightfully and blamelessly, and therefore to be wrongfully vexed by his enemies, he would look upon him especially, because relying on his help he hopes well, and also in the meanwhile he prays heartily to him. By the words *cry*, and *prayer*, he signifies the same thing; but yet the word *cry*, and the repeating of the same sentence, avails to betoken his great earnestness. Furthermore, inasmuch as hypocrites make proud boastings, and lift up their voice vociferously, in token of confidence, David denies that he speaks deceitfully; that is, holds out disguises to hide his offences, but that he comes forth into God's sight in sincerity. Therefore, by this manner of praying, the Holy Ghost instructs us to endeavour to live well, that if anybody be displeased with us, we may be able to boast, that we are without fault. Again; as oft as the wicked assault us, the same Spirit exhorts us to pray; because, if any man, standing upon the witness of a good conscience, neglect prayer, he defrauds God of his due honour; in that he yields not to him the office of judging. Let us learn further, that when we approach unto God we should not seek for well-turned phrases, because the whole grace of our rhetoric before God consists in unadorned simplicity.

2 *From the presence of thy countenance.*] Word for word, it is, *from before thy face*, or *before thy face*, by which words David means, that unless God rise up to revenge him, his right lies overwhelmed with slanders, and he is as a condemned person; for God's cognisance is tacitly contrasted with the darkness of leasing; as if he had said, he desires none other judge but God, nor refuses to come to his bar, because he brings with him a clean heart and a good cause. To the same purpose tends that which he subjoins concerning God's inspection; for he accuses not God of blindness, but only prays him to shew in very deed, that he winks not at men's wickedness, nor make small account of wretched souls that are troubled wrongfully. Some take the word *judgment* too restrictedly, for the right of the kingdom that was promised him, as if he should request to be placed in his throne by the hand of God, because he had been both

chosen king by him, and also anointed by the hand of Samuel by his appointment and in his name. But I doubt not that, because he was oppressed with many and sundry wrongs, he yields himself to the protection and defence of God.

3 Thou hast proved my heart; thou hast looked into it in the night; thou hast tried me, thou shalt not find: my thought shall not pass beyond my mouth.

4 At the doings of men, in the words of thy *lips*, I have taken heed of the ways of the destroyer.

Some suppose the past tense in the three first verbs to be put instead of the future tense. Others explain the sense more clearly and correctly, thus: If thou prove my heart, and look into it in the night, and thoroughly try it, there shall no falsehood be found it. Still, without altering anything, the sense will agree well enough thus: Thou, Lord, who knowest all the secret thoughts of my heart, as it belongs to thee to try men, knowest very well that I am not two-faced, nor foster any deceit within. Surely, David's design is not doubtful; for as he was unjustly oppressed with wrongful hatred, and could obtain no justice at men's hands, he appeals to the judgment of God: but lest he might do it rashly, he calls himself to a severe account, because God cannot be beguiled with the outward appearance, whose property it is to search the secret recesses of the heart. He expresses the night-time in regard of God's visitation, because that when he was withdrawn from the eyes of men, he saw more clearly the vices which otherwise would have lain hid. Like as again, the sight of men covers our faults with a sense of shame: as if he had said, Lord, whereas the darkness of the night lays the conscience more open, by taking away all coverings, and the affections disclose themselves more freely, because there is no man to bear witness or to find fault with them, if thou search me, even in that instant, there shall no falsehood be found in my heart. Hence we conjecture how great David's innocency was, who, summoning his inmost thoughts to account, offers himself so fearlessly to be tried by the judgment of God. And he not only clears himself from outward crimes, but also from all secret malice; because, forsooth, he candidly professed what he meditated in his heart; for our thought is said to pass beyond our mouth, when, with intent to deceive, the mind think otherwise than the tongue speak: although this word זמה, may also be taken, in a bad sense, for captious and crafty devices.

4 *At the doings of men.*] Interpreters expound this verse variously; for some, thinking the letter ב to be taken for *against*, translate it thus: At the doings of men, which they commit against thy word. But I agree rather with others, who say that in this place is commended the right judgment, which is exacted according to the appointment of God's word; for there are some subtle persons, who mark men's doings narrowly, but not according to the word of the Lord. But we have not yet gotten the full meaning of this place; for it remains still to be seen what ways they are, which he calls the ways of the destroyer. He seems to some, to denote his own retinue, who would have forthwith flown to the spoil, after the manner of robbers, if he had not restrained them; since being brought to the last cast, they were become bold through despair, for we know how sharp a goad necessity is. But this exposition seems to me to be constrained also, and therefore I rather refer it to his enemies. Besides, the interpreters agree not what should be meant by *taking heed*; for some take it, as though David had set himself vigorously against the froward, and such as wickedly made havoc of all things. Others take it that he gave himself wholly to finding out the difference between right and wrong, that he might beware of evil examples, and follow such things as he saw agreeing with the word of God. But I doubt not David meant otherwise; namely, to shew openly, that how muchsoever wicked men provoked him, yet was he held back by God's word from striving against them with force and injury, or from requiting evil for evil. Therefore he says, that whatsoever the works of men were, yet was he always so addicted to God's word, and did, as it were, so hang always upon his mouth, that he thought it in nowise lawful for him to render a like return to his enemies, although their wrongful dealing provoked him thereto. We know how sore a temptation it is, and how hard to overcome, not to consider how men deal with us, but what God forbiddeth or commandeth us; for even they that are inclined to upright dealing, so that they are desirous to do good to all men, and would wish to hurt no man; yet, when they are provoked, they burst forth with blind impetuosity to revenge themselves: especially, when we see all right and law perverted, such confusion blinds us so, that we hesitate not to howl with the wolves. Wherefore, according to David's example, the best way to rule ourselves will be, to cast our eyes upon the word of God, when our enemies, by their misdealing, provoke us to do harm; for thereby it will come to pass that our minds shall never be darkling, but shall always beware of froward ways,

because God will not only bridle our affections with his commandments, but also instruct us to patience with his promises: for he not only prohibiteth us all misdealing by forbidding it, but also, assuring us that he will be our avenger, he at the same time admonisheth us, to give place to his wrath.

5 Uphold my steps in thy paths, that the soles of my feet slide not.

6 I have called upon thee, surely thou wilt hear me, O God: bow down thine ear unto me, and hear my words.

5 *Uphold my steps.*] If we take God's paths for the commandments of the law, the meaning will be manifest; namely, that although David have rightly boasted that, even in the midst of most grievous temptations, he has always steadfastly followed righteousness with a pure mind; yet, conscious of his own infirmity, he commits himself to God's governance, desiring him to give him grace to persevere. As if he had said: Like as hitherto, by thy guiding, I have gone forward in the right way, so also guide thou my steps hereafter, that they slide not. And surely, the more any any man excels, the more has he need to beware of falling from his eminence; for it is the policy of Satan, even out of virtue, to work fleshly presumption, which may bring on apathy. Now, although I do not entirely reject this sense, yet it seems more likely to me that David, in this place, prays to God for happy success; as if he had said, Lord, inasmuch as thou seest me to be given wholly unto pureness, govern thou me in suchwise, that it may appear to all men, that thou art my keeper; and suffer me not to be cast down at the caprice of mine enemies. And so, by the ways of the Lord, he will mean, not the doctrine wherewith our life is ruled, but the power wherewith he upholdeth us, and the defence wherewith he preserveth us. And he calls him so, not only for that the issue of all things are in his hand, but also because that, when he regardeth us, then all things flow prosperously on our side; whereas he adds, *that the soles of my feet slide not*, he means, that every moment many adverse accidents cross us, and that we are in danger of miscarrying if the hand of God hold us not up.

6 *I have called upon.*] This verb of the past tense denotes a continued act, and therefore it comprehends the time present. If the particle כי imply a cause in this place, then the sense will be, that David took courage to pray,

because that, relying upon God's promise, he hoped his desires would not be disappointed. Unless, perhaps, it is preferred to change the time of the verb, as some do, to this effect: I will pray, because I have hitherto found, by experience, that thou hast heard my prayers. However, I have chosen what seemed to me plainest; for, in my judgment, David in this place animates and encourages himself with cheering hope, to call upon God: as though he had said, since I call upon thee, surely thou, O God, wilt not despise my prayers. Soon after, however, he requests to have them granted him, which he had said he hoped for.

7 Make wonderful thy mercies, O thou Preserver of them that trust *in thee,* from those that exalt themselves against thy right hand.

8 Keep me as the apple of an eye; hide me in the shadow of thy wings.

9 From the face of the ungodly, that go about to destroy me; and of mine enemies, that besiege me in my soul.

7 *Make wonderful.*] As the word הפלה signifies sometimes to make wonderful or notable, and sometimes to set apart, either of the two significations will suit the present place well enough. For as it is said, Ps. xxxi. 20; *The goodness of God is laid up in store as a special treasure for those that serve him, that he may bring it forth in due season, even at the last crisis of despair:* therefore, if it seem good to translate it, *set apart*, or *lay up thy mercies in store,* the meaning will be, that God would bring forth to his servant David that special grace which he vouchsafeth to none but the elect. For whereas God casteth both the good and the bad into danger promiscuously, he sheweth, by their totally different ends, that he doth not indiscriminately mingle the chaff and wheat together; because, he gathers those that are his severally to themselves. Notwithstanding, in my judgment, David, because he saw he could not be delivered but by rare and unwonted means, resorts to the miraculous power of God; for as for those who think he wishes that God should withhold his grace from his persecutors, they wrest the text too violently. Moreover, by this circumstance is expressed the greatness of the danger; because otherwise it had been enough for David to have been helped by some ordinary and common means; according as God is wont to show his favour daily to his servants, and to maintain them with his aid; therefore the

grievousness of his distress compelled him to desire a miracle in saving him. The title wherewith God is decked here, contributes to his hope of obtaining; for as God taketh upon him the charge of saving all that trust in him, with good reason might David, who was one of that number, assure himself that he should be saved. Therefore, as oft as we approach to God, let it first come to mind, that, inasmuch as God is not in vain called the Preserver of them that trust in him, if our faith do but lean upon his grace, it is not to be feared in anywise, but that he is ready to succour us. And if every way be closed up, let it also at the same time come to mind, that in his power there are incredible means of succouring, which may better shew forth his power. Howbeit, forasmuch as the participle *trusting*, or *hoping*, is put without any addition, some interpreters join it to the end of the verse, as though the order of the words were transposed. And thus they resolve it: *The preserver of the hopers in thy right hand, from those that rise up against them.* But because this is harsh, and the exposition which I have set down flows better and is more received, let us follow it. In one sentence, therefore, he attributes to God the office of defending and saving his servants against the ungodly, who rise up to oppose their welfare. And they are said to lift up themselves against the hand of God, because they openly wage battle against God in troubling the godly, whom he hath taken upon him to preserve. And this meaning contains a very profitable doctrine, that God is violated in our person, because, having once professed himself the maintainer of our welfare, he putteth out his hand before us as a shield, as often as we are wrongfully assailed. And hereunto pertain those two similitudes, of the apple of the eye, and of the young of birds, which David has added. For since God, minding to express how great regard he hath of those that are his, likeneth himself to hens and other fowls, which spread out their wings to cherish and cover their young, and declares that they are no less dear to him, than the apple of the eye, which is the tenderest part of the body, is to men; it follows, that war is waged against him, as oft as there is any rising up to hurt the faithful. For as this form of prayer is indited by the Holy Ghost, it contains a promise in it. And incredible is God's goodness, which humbles itself so low, and in a manner transforms itself, in order to lift up our faith above all carnal conceptions.

9 *From the face of the ungodly.*] Once again, accusing his enemies, he woes God's favour by the commendation of his own innocence. At the same time, however, he com-

plains of their cruelty, that God should be the forwarder to help him. For first, he says, they burn with desire of spoiling and destroying; secondly, he adds, that he is besieged in his soul; whereby he means that no other ransom will content them but his death. Therefore, the greater terror the cruelty of our enemies strike into us, the more must it quicken our zeal in prayer. And although God have no need of a remembrancer, yet the use and end of prayer is this; that when the faithful disburden their calamities and sorrows into God's lap, they should believe for a certainty that he regardeth their necessities.

10 They have closed themselves in their own fat; they have spoken proudly with their mouth.

11 In our steps have they compassed me round about; they have set their eyes to thrust down to the ground.

12 The likeness of him is as of a lion that is greedy upon his prey, and as of the lion's whelp lurking in secret places.

10 *They have closed.*] If any man prefer to translate it, as others do, *They have closed their own fat*, the meaning will be the same; for the exposition of certain Hebrews, *they were so stuffed with fat* that they could not well speak, because their throat was stopped, is too poor and spiritless. But I suppose that by this word *fat* is denoted the pride wherewith they swelled, as though it had been with fatness. And it is a very appropriate metaphor, that their breast was choked up with pride, as it had been with fat. Now I deny not that David complains how they were puffed up with wealth and pleasures, just as we see how the ungodly, the more luxuriously they are pampered, the more offensive their insolence. But I think here is described an inward vice; that is, that fenced on all sides with presumption, they even renounce all humanity; and then he says, that a token thereof is manifested in their language. The whole amounts to this; that they swell with inward pride, nor indeed do they seek to hide it, as appears by the high-swelling words they throw out. For in the word *mouth* there is no pleonasm, as there is often elsewhere; for David means, that openly, and with distended cheeks, they puff forth insults, which shew their pride.

11 *In our steps.*] He confirms what he had said before, of the furious passion for mischief wherewith his enemies were inflamed. For he says, they were so cruelly bent on

working his destruction, that whithersoever he turned himself they were ever at his heels. When he says *our steps*, doubtless he comprehends his own companions, although he returns forthwith to himself alone; unless perchance any one prefer the other translation, since some books have סבבונו in the plural number: but it matters little; for David complains simply, that except God stretch forth his hand out of heaven, there remains now no way for him to escape; because he no sooner stirs his foot than his enemies pursue him and watch all his steps. By the adverb of time *now*, he intimates, not only that he is in present peril, but also that his enemies pursue and press hard upon him every moment, which way soever he turns. Some expound the latter member as if David likened his enemies to hunters, who with eyes fixed on the ground pursue their prey in silence; and therefore they think that their carriage in casting down their eyes is here denoted: and certainly deceitful men often have their countenance so set. Others, however, understand it more properly, that by this figure is betokened the continual and weariless zeal by which the ungodly are impelled to turn all things upside down. Therefore, to set their eyes, is nothing but to apply and bend their whole ingenuity and efforts. And what follows, *to cast down to the ground* will mean to overthrow. For the ungodly, as though they must needs fall if the world should stand, could find in their hearts, that all mankind were rooted out; and therefore they set themselves with all their might to overthrow all men. This the next verse explains more fully by a similitude, where they are said to be like a lion, and a lion's whelps. But that principle is always to be remembered, that the more scornfully the ungodly rage against us, so much the nearer is God's hand to thwart their cruelty; for it is his peculiar praise to restrain wild and ravenous beasts. The reason why he names *dens*, or *privy lurking-places*, is, that his enemies were skilled in various methods of mischief, and had also means at hand, so that it was difficult to resist them.

13 Up, Lord, prevent his face, throw him down; rescue my soul from the ungodly, by thy sword:

14 From the men by thy hand, O Lord, from the men which are of the world, whose portion is in life, whose belly thou fillest with thy secret goods: their children are filled, and they leave the rest to their little ones.

The more violently David was pressed, the more calls he

for God's instant help; for he uses the word *face*, for swift violence, in repressing which there was need of the utmost speed. By which words the Spirit teacheth, that when death threatens us hard at hand, God is furnished with present help, which he is able to interpose in a moment. And he not only attributes to God the office of delivering, but at the same time arms him with power to crush the wicked. And yet he wishes not that they should be cast down further than it was needful that they should be humbled, so that they might cease from doing harm; in like manner as we gather from the member following, where he requires again to have his soul rescued, for he could easily have borne that they should stand untouched, if they had not abused their power to injustice and cruelty. Let us know then, that God provideth for those that are his, when he overthroweth the ungodly, and breaketh their strength, in order to deliver the guiltless souls from destruction. Furthermore, I do not agree with the interpreters, who take the expressions *from the ungodly, which is thy sword:* and also, *from the men, which are thine hand*, as if they were used in apposition. I confess, that whencesoever evils come, we are chastised by God's hand; and the ungodly are his scourges, and that this is the fittest trial of patience. But as it would be a somewhat harsh manner of speaking in this place, and also not very consistent with the prayer, I more willingly admit the other exposition; namely, that God should deliver him by his sword; that he should with his hand strike the men whose power and prosperity had lasted too long. For he opposes God's sword to man's aid; as if he should say, except God himself come forth to avenge and draw his sword, there is no hope of deliverance. That which follows in the next verse, *From the men with thy hand, O Lord, from the men which are of the world:* I connect the words thus: Lord, defend me with thy hand, or with thine heavenly aid, from the men, I say from the men whose tyranny has flourished too long, and whom thou hast suffered to rest too long in the dregs of their prosperity. And this repetition carries great force with it; because David, choked by a sense of the indignity, at first interrupts the sentence; then, recovering his breath, he sets forth what it is that distressed him. But as he had used the singular number, now he declares that those who are set against him are very many, yea, and strong and mighty; so that there remains no hope but in the help of God alone. The particle *of the world*, is diversely expounded. Some translate it *for a time*, as if David should say, that their estate should not be of any long continuance; which seems quite irrelevant. Others

think that such as are wholly given to the world, and savour of nothing but the earth are so called; therefore, according to those, David compares his enemies to brute beasts; and to this also refer they that which follows, *that their portion is in life; verily, because being void of the Spirit, and devoted to transitory goods, they mount not above the world.* For that is termed each man's portion, wherein he places his felicity. But as חלד among the Hebrews signifies a long continuance of time, or the career of a man's life, I doubt not but David complains that his enemies had flourished longer than they should have done. For although the frowardness of the ungodly might be borne with for a time, yet is it against reason that they should continue still, when they wanton against God. And this sense is confirmed by the preposition מן, by which David expresses that they were not sprung up three days before only, or of late, but that their prosperity, which should have vanished away in a moment, had lasted now time out of mind. Unless perhaps he term them *of the world,* because they bear the chief authority among men, and sit aloft in honour and wealth, as though the world had been made for their sakes alone. Now, when he says that their portion is in life, I take it thus; that they are free from all discomforts, and swim in pleasures; yea, and are exempted from the common lot of men; even as, on the other hand, the portion of wretched men is said to be in death. Therefore, he says, it is not meet that the ungodly should flutter about in joy and gaiety, without fear of death, and claim for themselves to live in peace and happiness, as it were, by right of inheritance. To the same purport is that which David adds by and by, *that God fills their bellies with his secret goods;* as certainly we see, not only that they enjoy the common light, breath, food, and other commodities, as well as other men; but also that God often treats them more daintily and costly than all others, as though he dandled them like tender babes in his lap. And therefore those rare and more exquisite dainties are called the secret goods of God. This were a hard temptation, if a man should measure God's favour by earthly prosperity, and therefore no wonder though David were greatly troubled with this circumstance. But we must bear in mind, that he seeks relief by godly complaint, and does not clamour against God; to the end, that we also may learn to direct our sighs to heaven. Some expound it more subtly, that the term God's secret goods, is applied to the things which the ungodly themselves devour without regard or remembrance of the giver; or else, because the reason why God should pour out his goods so bountifully upon

them is not apparent. But the exposition, which I have already given, as it is both simple and natural, so does it of itself sufficiently disprove the others. The last point is, that by continual succession they transmit their riches to their children and childrens' children. For since they are not of God's children, to whom this blessing is promised, it follows that they are fattened unto the day of slaughter. And therefore the drift of his complaint is, that God should speedily send forth his vengeance, considering that they have abused his lenity so long.

15 As for me, I will behold thy countenance in righteousness; when I shall awake, I shall be satisfied with thine image.

After he has, in the anguish of his heart, laid before God the troubles which galled and wrung him, lest he should be overwhelmed with the greatness of his temptations, he raises himself on the wings of faith, into the regions of undisturbed tranquillity, where he may behold things set in due order. For first, here is an implied comparison between the well-ordered state, when God shall by his judgment restore the things that are now confused; and the turbid mist which overcasts the world while God holdeth his peace, and hideth his face. For David, during those afflictions which he has recounted, might seem overwhelmed in everlasting darkness. For the ungodly seem near unto God, when they flourish in prosperity, honour, and riches. But David mocks at their proud boasting; and although, to outward appearance, he is cast off far from God, yet he promises himself the familiar sight of him. The pronoun *I*, is emphatic, as if he had said; his miseries and reproaches should not prevent his receiving in turn the fulness of joy from God's fatherly love. For this also is to be noted, that he holds this one thing sufficient for attaining sovereign bliss; namely, to feel himself in the favour of God, whom the wicked having against them, in vain imagine themselves happy. For God's countenance is but the sense of his fatherly good-will, wherewith he not only cheers us, by wiping away our sorrows, but also wafts us into heaven. By the term righteousness, he means that he shall not be disappointed of the reward of a good conscience. For as long as God humbles his servants with persecution and miseries, the world scoffs insolently at their simplicity, as if their endeavours to be pure were but rashness and folly. With this kind of mockery David grapples in this place, affirming that the fruit of his godliness is laid up for him, provided he depart not from obedience

to God; according as Isaiah, iii. 10. exhorts the faithful to sustain themselves with this persuasion; *It shall go well with the righteous.* And yet he does not therefore ascribe the cause of his welfare to his works. For he is not considering for what merits he is to be received into God's favour, but only sets this down for a principle, that they who serve God lose not their labour; because, howsoever he withdraw his face from them for a time, he will at length restore to them the brightness of his countenance in due season. *I shall be satisfied.* Some interpreters with more subtilty than propriety, restrain this sentence to the resurrection at the last day, as though David deferred the hope of his blessed joy, and suspended the fulfilment of longing desire, until the life to come. And I confess, that this satisfaction, of which he speaks, shall not be thoroughly perfect in all respects before Christ's last coming. But, since the saints, when God illumines them with the knowledge of his love, rest satisfied in this life, David justly terms this peace or joy of the spirit, *satisfaction.* For although the ungodly burst with their abundance, yet because their desire is insatiable, or because they are fed with wind, or because they are so beside themselves, that they perceive not their good, or because they are harassed with dire torments of conscience, they are never quiet and at ease in their minds, but are ever on the fret with schemes of vanity. Therefore it is the grace of God alone that is able to keep us from being carried hither and thither by our unseasonable desires. Wherefore I doubt not David alludes to the fond delights of the world, which do but inflame our lusts; that he may shew, that none enjoy substantial happiness, save those that are satisfied with God alone. Now, because word for word in the Hebrew he says, *I shall be satisfied at the awaking of thy face,* or *by thy face;* many, preferring the first exposition, understand that the face of God awakes, or is awakened, when the light of his grace appears, which before was overspread with mists. But to me it seems more correct to refer the word *awake* to David, that it should import as much as to have respite from his heaviness. For although he was at no time overpowered with stupor, yet it could not be but that after long-continued harassing he lay as it were in a slumber. For the saints sustain not, nor repulse all assaults so courageously, but that, by reason of the weakness of the flesh, they either faint for awhile, or are terrified, when, as it were, darkness overshadows them. David therefore compares this disquietude to a slumber. And as soon as God's favour shall shine upon him again, he says that, upon recovering his energies, he shall be at peace again. It

is truly said by Paul, 2 Cor. v. 7. that as long as we are pilgrims in the world, *we walk by faith, and not by sight.* Nevertheless, as we daily behold the image of God, not only in the glass of the Gospel, but also in so many proofs of his grace; let every man awaken himself from drowsiness, that we may be satisfied with spiritual felicity, until such time as God shew himself to us to enjoy him face to face.

PSALM XVIII.

We know by what distresses and sore hindrances David attained to his kingdom; for, till the death of Saul, he dragged on his life with fear, amid many deaths, in banishment and outlawry. Afterwards, when God had with his own hand set him on the royal throne, he was met with intestine discords. And as the faction of his adversaries was too strong, he was often at the point of destruction. And as for foreign enemies, they plied him hard even to his old age. These afflictions he could never have overcome, unless he had been aided by the power of God. Therefore, having gotten many and signal victories, he sings not of his own triumphs, as heathens are wont to do; but he celebrates God the author of them with rightful praises. This Psalm therefore is a commencement, wherein David proudly magnifies God's wonderful grace, as well in advancing him to the kingdom, as in maintaining his estate. Afterwards he shews, that in his reign was shadowed the image of Christ's kingdom, that the faithful might persuade themselves that Christ shall always have the upper hand, through the stupendous power of the Father, though all the world say nay to it, and strive never so much against it.

[*To the chief chanter, of David the servant of the Lord, which rehearsed the words of this song unto the Lord, in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul.*]

The marking of the time is not a little material in teaching us that David, when his troubles were over, did not wanton in delirious revelry, as heathenish men do, who, as soon as they are released from their distresses, shake off the remembrance of God's benefits, and either plunge themselves into gross pleasures, or set up their crests, or darken God's glory with the mists of their own boasting. For the sacred story reports, that he sung this song to the Lord when he was now almost spent with age, and, sat in quiet, relieved from all trouble, 2 Sam. xxii. The title also agrees thereto, which as I gather from the reasons aforesaid was not assigned unadvisedly. And he points out the time, namely, after God had delivered him from all his enemies, that we might know

he was then in perfectly quiet possession of his kingdom, and that God had helped him, not once, or in respect of one kind of enemy only, forasmuch as he had fresh conflicts from time to time, and the end of one war was the beginning of another, nay, frequently manifold hosts rose up against him at once. For scarcely is there any one to be found since the creation of the world, whom God hath exercised so many ways. But because Saul had persecuted him more cruelly, and with greater fury and obstinacy than all the rest, therefore is his name stated expressly, whereas general mention had been made of all his enemies before. For he is not put last, as though he had been of later time, for he was already dead thirty years before, since whose decease David had subdued many foreign enemies, and suppressed the rebellion of his own son Absalom. Now, therefore, because he knew it was a most memorable instance of the grace of God, that he had so many years together escaped from innumerable deaths, or rather that as many days as he had passed under the reign of Saul, so many miracles had God shewed in saving him; it is not without cause that he makes mention chiefly of this deliverance. In terming himself *the servant of God*, doubtless he meant to notify his own calling, as if he should say, he had not pounced upon the kingdom unadvisedly, but only obeyed God's appointment. And surely it was a most necessary stay in so many storms; or rather, it was his only haven in his shipwrecks, to be well assured in himself of God's commandment. For nothing is more miserable than man in adversity, if he come into trouble by the impulse of his own inclination. Therefore with the best intention would David have it known, that he was neither moved by ambition to these encounters with which he had been so sore touched, nor had attempted anything by evil practices against right; but that God's commandment was the light that led him: a point which it is not a little profitable for us to know, that we may not look to be exempted from all trouble when we follow the calling of God, but rather prepare ourselves to a hard warfare. The name of *servant*, then, is in this place, as in many others, referred to his public office; like as when the prophets and apostles call themselves the servants of God. As if he should say, he is not a king set up by himself, but chosen by God. By the way, his mildness is worthy of remark, that being ennobled with so many victories, a conqueror of so many nations, and endued with so great dignity and wealth, he honours himself with no other title, than *the servant of God*; as though he counted it more honourable to have faithfully performed the

charge appointed him by God, than to have all the excellency of the world.

2 And he said, I will love thee, O Lord, my strength.

3 The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, I will trust in him; my shield, the horn of my welfare, and my refuge.

2 *And he said.*] I will not here inquire over curiously about the few syllables or words in which this Psalm differs from that song which is mentioned, 2 Sam. xxii. except that if I meet with any difference of importance I will touch upon it in its place, as, for instance, the leaving out of this sentence, *I will love thee, O Lord, my strength,* is worthy of note. Moreover, forasmuch as the scripture uses not the verb רחם for *to love,* but in the conjugation *Piel,* and that it is here put in the conjugation *Kal,* some Hebrews interpret it *to seek mercy;* as if David had said, Lord, forasmuch as I have found thee merciful so often, I will lean unto thy mercies evermore. And this exposition would not be incongruous, nevertheless I would not depart from the other, which is more received. But it is to be noted, that the loving of God is put here as the chief head of godliness; because he is worshipped with nothing better. Truly, I confess that the service which we owe him, is more accurately expressed in the term *reverence,* that his majesty may stand out in its proper degree. But forasmuch as he requireth nothing more than to possess all the affections of our heart, there is no sacrifice more excellent in his sight than when he holdeth us bound to him with the bond of free and willing love; like as again his glory shines forth in nothing more effectually than in his free goodness. Therefore Moses, Deut. x. 12. when purposing to give a summary of the law, says; Now, Israel, what requireth the Lord God of thee, but that thou shouldest love him. Howbeit, David shews at the same time, that he is not so intent on the benefits of God themselves, that he can be unthankful to the author of them; a fault too common in all ages. And even at this day we see that the greater part of the world neglects or rather despises God, and yet can take pleasure in his gifts. But David for fear of falling into this unthankfulness, as it were, makes a solemn vow, in these words: Lord, because thou art my confidence, I will yield myself wholly unto thee with unfeigned love.

3 *The Lord is my rock.*] That he heaps together a great many titles to honour God with, is not superfluous. For

we know how hard a thing it is for men to keep their minds and hearts bent unto God. For either they imagine that God sufficeth them not, so that they are always seeking succour elsewhere, or they shake off their trust at every assault of temptation. David, therefore, in attributing sundry methods of saving to God, testifies that he is so well and sufficiently fenced, that he needs no more than that God should be the maintainer of his welfare; as if he should say, that those whom God is willing to defend, are not only safe against some one kind of danger, but also on all sides so strongly fenced that no kinds of death are to be feared. We see then that not only the praises of God are set forth here in the way of thankfulness, but also men's minds are armed with firm and steadfast faith, that they may always have recourse to God whatsoever befall them; and assure themselves that his power is manifold, according to the sundry devices of the wicked to do mischief. And not without cause, as I told you before, is David so full on this point. For if God have helped us in one way, as soon as a fresh tempest arises we are no less dismayed than if we had never experienced his help. But they that in some one trouble wait for succour at his hand, and afterwards in a niggardly spirit circumscribe his power, deal as if a man going to battle should take no care of his breast, because he is armed with a breastplate and a shield, but should be in fear for his head, because he wants a helmet: David therefore here supplies the faithful with a panoply that they may feel that they are exposed to no wounds, if they are armed with the protection of God. And that this is the gist of his meaning he declares when he says, *I will trust in him.* Wherefore let us learn, by his example, to set these titles of God against whatsoever troubles assail us; yea, and let them sink deep in our remembrance, so that whatsoever fear Satan suggests upon us, it may be kept far from entrance. For we not only waver in present troubles, but also imagine unreal perils to come, to disquiet ourselves to no purpose. In 2 Sam. xxii. 3. instead of *my God, my defence,* it is written *the God of my defence:* and after the name of *refuge,* is written there *my stronghold, my saviour, thou shalt save me from wrong;* which words make the sentence fuller, but they come to the same thing.

4 I will call upon the praised Lord, and I shall be saved from mine enemies.

5 The cords of death had compassed me about; the blood of wickedness had made me afraid.

6 The cords of the grave had compassed me about; the snares of death had overtaken me.

7 In my distress I called upon the Lord, and I cried unto my God; and he hath heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry before him came unto his ears.

4. *I will call upon the praised.*] Although calling upon God, as has been said elsewhere, often comprehends his whole service, yet as there follows here the effect of prayer, I doubt not that it signifies here, *to put himself under the protection of God, and to seek safety at his hand.* And David adds this testimony of his hope, because whosoever trusts in God, calls upon him for help in his need. Therefore he assures himself of safety, and victory against all his enemies, because he will flee unto God. And David calls God, *the praised Lord;* not only because he is praiseworthy, as almost all translate it, but also to give us to understand that his prayers shall be mixed with praises. For so the context seems to require; namely, that with thanksgiving for his former benefits, he should sue for his aid in accomplishing his plans. And, surely, except a man raise up himself with remembrance of God's grace, he shall never pray with a free heart. Therefore Paul, Phil. iv. 6. exhorts the faithful, that in all prayer they should with thanksgiving lay their cares and requests in the lap of God. Besides, those who clamour against God and importune him, praise him not together with their praying.

5. *The cords of death.*] Now David begins to tell by what certain and evident experience he has found the hand of God to be mighty and strong enough to repress any kind of evil. And it is no marvel that those things are adorned poetically and with the garniture of splendid diction, which might have been described more simply and in even style. For the Holy Ghost, purposing to contend with the malicious and ill-disposed natures of men, hath here furnished David, as it were, with transcendent eloquence, that might awaken the world to consider God's benefits. There is scarce any benefit of God so palpable, as that our maliciousness does not hide it. Therefore, that David may the more effectually pierce our senses, he says, that the safety which God had bestowed upon him, was plain to be seen in the whole frame of the world. We must bear well in mind this purpose of his, lest we think him to pass due bounds in his lofty style. The conclusion of the whole then is: that when he was now brought to the utmost extremity he resorted

to God for help, and was wonderfully preserved. As concerning the words, the Hebrews call חובלים, either cords, or sorrows, or any deadly mischief, because it wastes a man, and tends to his destruction. That the Psalm may agree with his song, I do not object that it should be taken for contrition, because it is written there, משברי מות, which word is derived from grieving. But because the metaphor of cords or snares will agree more fitly with the word *compass*, as if he had said, he had been wrapped in the perils of death, I willingly embraced this interpretation. That which which follows of floods, implies as much as if he had said he had been overwhelmed with violent rage, as if it were with a flood. And he calls them the floods of Belial, because wicked and froward persons had conspired against him. For among the Hebrews the name of Belial has a large scope, and the translators agree not about the original of it. Why Jerome should translate it *without yoke*, I know not. The more allowed opinion is, that it is compounded of יעל and בלי, because the ungodly get not up or prevail not. Certainly the Hebrews betoken by that word any manner of horrible wickedness. Whence it is likely that David had an eye to his enemies, who wickedly and impiously practised his destruction. Notwithstanding, if any man like better to translate it *the deadly floods*, I will not strive with him. In the next verse he repeats again, that he had been beset by the corruptions or *cords* of the grave. For as the Hebrew word is the same, I thought good to translate it *cords* in this place also; not only because he uses the word besetting, or girding about, but also because soon after he adds, *the snares of death*, as I suppose, in the same sense. This is the description of the danger which enhances the glory of his deliverance; because David, being brought into such desperate peril, could not be delivered by the power of man.

7 *In my distress.*] That David being in a manner sunk in the gulf of death, lifts up his heart into heaven by prayer, was an illustrious proof of rare faith. Let us know therefore that this glass is set before our eyes, to the end that no excess of misfortune might deter us from praying. And because his prayer procured him this advantage, so it appeared the better that he was delivered by God's providence. By the word *cry*, as I have said elsewhere, he signifies longing and earnest desire. Again; by calling him his God, he puts a difference between himself and the gross despisers of God, or the hypocrites; who, under constraint of necessity, do indeed call upon the heavenly power in a wild, irregular manner, but approach not God either familiarly or with a pure heart, as having no sense of his fatherly favour. Therefore,

when the light of faith goes before, so that we believe that God is a father to us, then truly is the gate set open for us to have mutual communication with him. Besides this, David, assuring himself that God is on his side, makes him opposed to his enemies; which pertains to the commendation of his godliness. By the name of temple is not meant the sanctuary, as in many other places, but heaven; for the figure which he will add soon after cannot be applied to the sanctuary: his meaning then is, that when he was forsaken in the world, and all men's ears were deaf to him, God stretched forth his hand to him from out of heaven.

8 Then the earth moved itself and quaked; and the foundations of the mountains shook and stirred themselves, because he was wroth.

9 There went up a smoke into his nostrils, and the fire consumed which went out of his mouth: coals were kindled at it.

10 And he bowed the heavens, and came down: and there was darkness under his feet.

11 And he rode upon cherub, and flew; and was carried upon the wings of the wind.

12 He made darkness his secret place: round about him was his tent, darksomeness of water and the clouds of heaven.

8 *Then the earth.*] Because David could not extol God's help which he had felt, according to its desert; he points out an image of it in the air and earth; as if he had said, it had been as visible as the changes are manifest which alter the face of the air and the earth. For if things should flow always evenly and in one uniform course, God's power would not be so manifest to sense. But when he altereth the weather with sudden rain, or with thunderings, or with tempests, even they that were before in a sound sleep must needs awake, because such sudden changes better shew the presence of God. Surely, God's majesty is manifest even when the sky is fair and calm; but because men lift not up their senses to consider it till it come nearer to them, David, to touch us the more effectually, reckons up the sudden changes by which we are wont to be moved, and brings in God one while clothed in a dark cloud, another while confounding all things with tempest; now sweeping through the midst of the air with boisterous violence of winds; now lightning; and

anon darting down hailstones and thunderbolts. The whole comes to this; that the same God, who by his power shaketh all parts of the world, as often as he listeth, shews as manifest and certain tokens of himself when it was his will to come and deliver David, as if he had exerted his power upon all his creatures both above and beneath. First, he says, that the earth was shaken; because nothing is more dreadful than an earthquake. Instead of *the foundations of the mountains,* it is written in the song, *the foundations of the heavens,* but in the same sense, namely, that there is nothing so stable and firm in the world, which trembled not, and moved not out of its place. Yet does not David, as I told you before, report these things historically; but uses these similitudes to take away all doubting, by reason of the dulness of men, who apprehend not God except in outward signs. For, that these miracles were wrought openly, as some men suppose, is scarcely to be believed, inasmuch as, in declaring the story of his life, the Holy Ghost speaks nothing at all of these things. And truly this hyperbolic manner of speech cannot be subject to censure, if we bethink us of our own dulness, and also of our depravity, according as I have taught just now. For David, who was far more penetrating and sharp of sight than the common sort of men, because he could not have profited sufficiently among sluggards and dolts by a simple manner of speaking, describes under outward shapes the power of God which he himself had seen by faith and in spirit. And it is not the least to be doubted, that David did more distinctly perceive the very present power of God, than the dull sort of common people perceive the hand of God in earthquakes, tempests, thunders, dismal lowerings of the heavens and sweeping winds. At the same time, it is fitting that we should consider, that how wondrously soever God manifested his favour in preserving David, yet many supposed that the reason why all things fell out well, was either from his own policy, or his good fortune, or some other natural means. For such dulness or depravity as this it was that induced him to call all creatures to witness. Wisely also and rightly do some observe, that in all this description he alludes to the common deliverance of the people out of Egypt. For inasmuch as God at that time established an everlasting instruction, whereby the faithful might learn that he was the maintainer of their welfare; whatsoever benefits he bestowed upon his people afterwards, either in common, or in several, they were as it were certain appendages to that first deliverance. Therefore, in other places also, to commend the succour sent by God unto his

people, he sets forth that memorable specimen, as it were the original or archetype of the grace of God. And surely seeing that many in the time of his banishment had him in derision as an outlaw from the household of God, and many murmured that he had taken upon him the kingdom by violence, it was most reasonable that he should include the defence of his welfare under the common deliverance of the people. As if he had said; there was no reason why he should be shaken off as a stranger, whom God in very deed had proved to be accounted before him a distinguished and excellent member of his church. For we see how the prophets, when they mean to put the people in hope of their salvation, call them back to that first covenant, which was established with those wonders that were wrought in Egypt, in passing the Red sea, and upon mount Sinai. He says, that the earth trembled when God was wroth, in respect of the ungodly. For so speaketh God oftentimes, that being kindled with displeasure and zeal, he armeth himself to maintain the welfare of the faithful.

9 *There went up a smoke.*] The word אף in Hebrew, signifies properly a nose, or the nostrils. But, as now and then it is taken metaphorically for wrath, some translate it thus; *There went up a smoke from his wrath;* in my judgment not so fitly. For David compares the mists and steams, wherewith the air is darkened, to the thick smoke which is puffed out at the nostrils of an angry man. And hence is known the better how dreadful is the wrath of God, when he beclouds the air with his blast, and, taking from us the brightness of the sun and all the stars, overwhelmeth us with darkness. Nor otherwise would what follows apply; that the fire which went out of his mouth consumed. For his meaning is, that God without any greater effort, as soon as he shall but send out the blast of his nostrils, and open his mouth, can kindle a fire, the smoke whereof shall be able to darken the whole world, and afterwards devour it with its heat. For whereas he adds, that coals were kindled, it shews its difference from a vanishing flame. The bowing of the heavens designates a cloudy time: for when thick vapours occupy the middle of the air, the clouds seem to lie upon our heads. And not that only, but the majesty of God also strikes a dreadful fear into us by approaching nearer us, and distresses us with anguish, who, when the weather was fair, were altogether set upon mirth. But we must bear in mind that under the darkening of the sky is portrayed unto us God's wrath; because, as the light is clear, the pleasant countenance of God cheereth us; so, when the air is

troublesome, as though he were ready to fall upon us with frowning brows, we are compelled to droop for grief. By the way, we are warned, that there is no alteration made either in the air, or in the earth, that does not evidence God's presence.

11 *And he rode upon the cherubim.*] As in the clouds and in the darkening of the air, he has exhibited to us a sign of God's wrath, as though he puffed out smoke at his nostrils, and came down threateningly to bow down mankind with the awful array of his power; and also has said, that in lightnings and thunderbolts, flaming fire went out of his mouth; so now he represents him riding upon the winds and tempests, that he might traverse the whole world with rapid speed, or rather with the swiftness of flying. A similar description is in Psalm civ. 3. where God is said to be carried upon the wings of the winds, whom he sendeth forth every way as swift messengers. However he makes not God simply the ruler of the winds, and as one that driveth them by his power; but also he says that he rideth upon cherubim; that we may know that the very violence of the winds is governed by angels at his commandment. For we know that the angels were represented under the figure of cherubim. And, therefore, I doubt not but David's purpose was to make allusion to the ark of the covenant. For so he sets forth God's power as it is to be seen in the wonders of nature, as that notwithstanding he departs not from the temple, where he knew that God had disclosed himself to the children of Abraham after a peculiar manner. Therefore he celebrates God not only as creator of the world, but as him that had made covenant with Israel, and chosen himself a holy dwelling place in the midst of him. For he could have called them by their general name, angels; but he put the visible sign of the ark on purpose, to the end the faithful should apply their minds to the worship of the temple. That which follows, concerning God's cloudy pavilion, is a repetition of the former sentence, in other words; namely, that God, overcasting the air with darkness, doth after a sort prohibit men his sight; in like manner as if a king, being displeased with his subjects, should withdraw himself out of the way, and hide him in some secret place. For they are deceived who apply this verse generally to prove God's secret glory, as though David, purposing to restrain the boldness of man's inquisitive nature, should say that God is hidden in darkness. True it is, I confess, that God dwells in inapproachable light; but I doubt not that this expression ought to be restrained to the circumstance of the present place, in the sense I have alleged.

13 At the brightness of his presence his clouds passed away; hailstones and coals of fire.

14 And the Lord thundered in the heavens, and the Highest uttered his voice; hailstones and coals of fire.

15 And he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he multiplied lightnings, and astonished them.

16 And the headsprings of the waters were seen, and the foundations of the round world were discovered at thy rebuking, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.

17 He sent down from on high, and took me up; he led me out of many waters.

18 He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from mine adversary: because they were too strong for me.

19 They had prevented me in the day of my trouble: and the Lord was my stay.

20 And he brought me forth at large; he delivered me because he had a favour unto me.

13 *At the brightness.*] Once more he returns to the lightnings which unmuffle the heavens by dissipating the clouds; that is to say, the clouds, which he had set before him in token of his anger to bereave men of the light of his countenance, passed away at his brightness, or by reason of his brightness. For these sudden alterations touch us with a more intense perception of God's power. He adds, that hailstones with coals of fire followed after; that is to say, when the clouds are cleft with the thunder, or when lightnings break out, or when the clouds resolve themselves into hail.

14 *And the Lord thundered.*] He impresses upon us the same thing in other words; namely, that God thundered from heaven. And he terms the thunder itself the voice of God, lest we might surmise it to be engendered either by chance or by natural causes, without the commandment of God. Indeed, philosophers see the intermediate or inferior causes; namely, that when the cold and moist damps obstruct the dry and hot mists in their course upward, an explosion is occasioned from the collision, even from the rupture of the clouds. But David, mounting in the spirit

above the phenomena of the air, makes God the ruler of all things, who at his own will pierceth into the hidden veins of the earth, and from thence bringeth forth exhalations; and afterwards, dividing them into their kinds, dispersеth them through the air, and then gathering the vapours into a mass, setteth them to fight with the thin and dry heats, as though he sent forth a voice out of his own mouth. This repetition does the song pursue, but yet the sense agrees in all points. And here is to be remembered what I have said heretofore; that David describes God's mightiness to us under these terrible figures, that he may the better set forth his grace in delivering him. And he expounds his own meaning himself soon after, when he writes that his enemies were dispersed by the arrows of God; as if he should say, they had not been overthrown by the hands or swords of men, but by God's thundering down upon them openly. Not that he affirms the fact historically, but because the rude and wilful sort could not otherwise be brought to perceive that God was his deliverer. As if he should say, They may as well deny that God thundereth, and they may as well abolish his whole power in the order of nature, and especially in these wonderful changes, as not acknowledge me to have been saved by his hand. And because God shoots out lightnings as if they were arrows, he has set down the metaphor in the first place, and afterwards expressed the thing by its own name.

16 *And the headsprings of the waters.*] No doubt in this verse he alludes to the miracle that was wrought in passing the Red sea. For what purpose that is done I have told before. For, as by the special benefits which God bestowed in old time upon the children of Abraham severally, he put them in remembrance from time to time of the covenant once established with the whole people, that they might be thoroughly persuaded of his continual grace, and that one deliverance might be to them an assurance or warrant of continual help and protection, David fitly connects the help that was given him privately out of heaven, with that former deliverance of the church. For inasmuch as the grace which he says was shewn to him, was not to be separated from that first deliverance, seeing it was a parcel and sequel of the same; he beholds, as it were in one moment, both the miracle of drying up the Red sea, and also the help that was ministered to himself. The sum is, that God, who once made way for his servants to pass through the Red sea, and shewed himself to be their defender, upon condition that they should assure themselves that they would be always in safety under his keeping, did now again shew forth his

wonderful power in the preserving of one man, that he might renew the remembrance of that ancient history. Whence it appears the better, that David, in these hyperbolical expressions, does not deal in fiction like a poet, but keeps the order which God hath prescribed to the faithful. At the same time also should be marked the reason that compelled him to magnify God's grace to the utmost; namely, because the greater part of the people, either of malice or madness, passed it over with closed eyes. The Hebrew word אפיקים, which I have translated *headsprings*, properly signifies channels; nevertheless it is not to be doubted that in this place David means that the very headsprings of the waters were laid open, so that it might be discerned from whence the rivers have an exhaustless store and abundance of waters to continue their course with.

17 *He sent down from on high.*] Here is briefly shewn the drift of this so brilliant a narration; namely, that we might know that David had not waded out of the depth of the bottomless pits by his own policy, nor by the aid of men, but was drawn out by the hand of God. For God is said to send help from on high, when he saves us wondrously and by unwonted means. And so this sending is opposed to earthly succours, upon which we are foolishly wont to set our minds. I disallow not their opinion who expound it of angels, but yet I extend it further: because, by what means soever we are preserved, God appointeth his creatures, which are ready at his beck, to take charge of us, and girds them with armour to succour us. Wherefore, although all manner of help comes from heaven, yet David justly affirms that God reached out his hand to him from on high, to the end he might by way of eminence distinguish this incredible benefit, above other more common benefits. For there is an implied comparison between this unwonted working and other common and ordinary means of help. His expression that he was taken out of great waters by the power of God, is a metaphorical manner of speaking. For by likening the cruelty of his foes to swift streams, with which he might have been swept away a hundred times, he expresses the greatness of the danger more evidently; as though he said he had been saved from shipwreck by help from on high, contrary to hope. The next verse declares the thing simply, without figure; namely, that he had been saved from a strong enemy, who had hated him mortally, and persecuted him. For herein commends he the power of God, because no strength of men prevented his saving him in utter despair. Because that in the end of the verse there is this participle, כי, which among the Hebrews importeth com-

monly a cause, the expositors take it generally in this sense: God hath rescued me from above, because my foes were grown too strong for aught to be hoped for at men's hands. Whence also is gathered a profitable doctrine; namely, that the most convenient time for God to help his own is, when they are unable to resist their enemies; or rather, when they are so broken and afflicted, that they sink under their violence, just as if a man that had suffered shipwreck were haled into the deep, without hope of swimming out. Notwithstanding, it might also be expounded adversatively, that though David's enemies had overmatched him, yet was he saved nevertheless.

19 *They had prevented me.*] He confirms in other words the last sentence, how he was upheld by the help of God at what time there was no way to escape. For he reports how he was besieged on every side, and that not with an ordinary siege, but in suchwise that his enemies pursued him, and pressed upon him. By which circumstance it appears more clearly that he was not set at large but by the hand of God: for from whence came so sudden a restoration from death to life, but because it was God's will to shew that the issues of death are in his hand? Finally, that the whole and full praise might redound to God, David declares that the only cause thereof was God's mere good-will or pleasure. And he makes mention of his good pleasure in respect of his own calling: for the point that he rested chiefly upon is, that the encounters with which he was harassed were not stirred up against him for any other reason than because he obeyed the call of God, and had patiently embraced his commandment. For although ambitious and troublesome men, who are carried headlong by their own lusts, to adventure anything, and rashly bring trouble on themselves, do by wrestling stoutly and courageously frequently attain their desires, yet in the end fall haplessly, because they are unworthy to be sustained by God, since they of themselves raise up to heaven their insane structures which have no foundation in faith. In short, David testifies that God's help was always ready at hand for him, because he had not thrust himself in of his own head, but was anointed by the hand of Samuel, (which was an assured warrant of God's free election,) at such time as he was contented with his slender estate, and would willingly have lain hid in the sheepcotes, or in his father's hut.

21 The Lord hath rewarded me after my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.

22 Because I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly shrunk from my God.

23 Because all his judgments are before me, and I have not cast his commandments from me.

24 And I have been sound with him, and have kept myself from mine own wickedness.

25 And the Lord hath rewarded me according to my righteousness, and according to the cleanness of my hands before his eyes.

21 *The Lord hath rewarded me.*] David might seem at first view to contradict himself. For whereas he just now imputed all his blessings to the good pleasure of God, now he boasts that he is requited with a just reward. But if we consider to what end he adds these encomiums of his own integrity to the good pleasure of God, the agreement of the two sentiments will easily appear. First, he protested that he came not to the hope of the kingdom but by the guiding of God, nor was raised by the suffrages of men, nor had stept forth of his own head, but because it had pleased God to have it so. Now, secondly, he adds, that he had yielded faithful obedience to God, so that he never turned aside from his will. For both these things were needful: namely, that God should freely prevent David with his favour, and choose him to be king; and also that David should, on the other hand, obediently and with a pure conscience, receive the kingdom offered him by God; and furthermore, steadfastly keep the direct course of his calling, whatsoever the wicked practised to undermine his faith. Now we see there is so little disagreement between these two meanings, that they correspond most aptly. David makes God here, as it were, the president of a contest, under whose auspices and conduct he is brought forth to the encounter. And this depends upon election, because he had embraced him with his favour, to make him king. Afterwards he adds, that he has executed the charge enjoined him, even to the uttermost, with due obedience. No marvel then if God, by his defence, maintained his own champion, whom he had brought in of his own choice; and also by apparent miracles shewed himself to be the defender of him who he saw had performed his duty with all faithfulness. Neither has he here babbled out empty boasting, to seek commendation; but it was the will of the Spirit to give forth a profitable doctrine by his mouth: that is to say, that God's help shall never fail us, if we are well assured of our vocation, and attempt not anything without his warrant. And by the way let us bear this

in mind, that the beginning of a right course is the good pleasure of God, by which he adopteth us, and his calling, whereby he preventeth us. Notwithstanding, there remains yet one question: for if God render reward of righteousness, it seems that according as every man has deserved, so is God liberal to him. I answer, that under the name of reward is not shewn what God oweth, and therefore it is absurd and erroneous to gather therefrom merit or desert of works. For God, as a just judge, so rewards every man according to his works as that nevertheless he hath all men beholden to him, and he himself is bound to no man. The reason is, not only, as Austin alleges, because he findeth no righteousness in us, whereunto he may yield recompense, saving such righteousness as he hath bestowed upon us himself; but also because, bearing with the blemishes of our works, he accepts our unrighteousness, which he might justly reject. Now if none of our works please God without forgiveness, it follows that the reward is not of merit, but of grace. Nevertheless, here is a special reason to be noted: for David does not here obtrude himself before God, in confidence of perfect righteousness; but wishing to avouch his own zeal, which he knew to be approved of God, against the wicked slanders of his enemies, he refers the matter to the arbitrement of God. For we know how shamefully he was oppressed with unmerited odium, and yet, by these reproaches, not so much his good name as the common welfare of the whole church was assailed. For although Saul's own individual grief drove him to madness, and all other men rushed with eager violence against David to pleasure the king with their service, yet it is not to be doubted that it was by the impulse of Satan that that kingdom was so sorely assaulted, because that in the person of one man God had placed the hope of salvation of the whole people. This is the reason why David contends so carefully and earnestly for the righteousness of his own cause. Moreover, when he pleads with his enemies at the judgment-seat of God, he treats not of his whole life, but of one certain cause. Therefore the state of the controversy is to be considered; namely, that they burdened David with many charges; first, of rebellion and treason, as if he had revolted from the king his father-in-law; secondly, of robbery, as though he had crept into the kingdom by stealth; also of sedition, as though he had troubled the quiet state of the realm; and lastly, of cruelty, and many heinous crimes, as though he had given occasion of slaughters, and had prosecuted his conspiracy by many unlawful practices. But he, desiring to maintain his innocence before God, affirms that he had dealt uprightly

and faithfully in that matter, because he neither had attempted anything without God's commandment, and whatsoever his enemies had practised, yet kept he himself within his bounds. It were folly to infer hence, that God is merciful to men according as he deems them worthy of his favour; for here is only avouched the goodness of the cause against the wicked slanderers, and not the whole life of man summoned to trial, that he should obtain favour, and be adjudged righteous. To be brief; David gathers, by the effect, that his cause pleased God; not because one victory is a continual sign of a good cause, but because God, by the manifest signs of his help, shewed himself to be on David's side.

22 *Because I have kept.*] Although he had spoken of the cleanness of his hands, yet, because he saw how men judged perversely of him, in affirming himself to have kept the ways of the Lord, he, as it were, appeals to his judgment-seat; for hypocrites are wont to vaunt themselves boldly, yea nothing is more common with them than to put forward God's holy name in the way of sport. But David alleges nothing which might not have been well known to men, if there had been any uprightness among them. Therefore we must, by his example, in anywise endeavour to have a good conscience of our own. Again, let us evermore have this greatness of soul; namely, to despise the false misdeemings of men, and to seek our defence in heaven. He adds, that he has not shrunk wickedly from God, because he always went right on to the mark of his vocation, although the wicked practised many things to overthrow his faith. For the word which he uses betokens not some one fall, but a falling away which utterly estranges a man from God. And although David, according to the weakness of the flesh, now and then offended, yet did he never depart from the following of godliness, or desert the warfare committed to him.

23 *Because all his judgments.*] Now shews he from whence he had that inflexible steadfastness in right dealing among so many most grievous temptations; namely, because he always carried back his mind to the law of God. For, like as Satan stirs up daily new assaults against us, so also it behoves us to fly for arms, and the minding of God's law yields us armour. Therefore, let those whose hearts are set upon perfect uprightness, learn to occupy themselves daily in the study of God's word; for, as soon as instruction is neglected, folly easily creeps over them, and all fear of God fades away. I make no subtle distinction here between *judgments* and *commandments;* still, if any man list to put a

difference between them, it will not be unsuitable that *judgments* should be referred to the second table of the law, and *commandments*, which by the Hebrews are called חוקות, should be taken for the service of godliness.

I have been found with him.] All these words are, with David, of the future tense; for he boasts not of any transient act, but of steady perseverance. And whereas I have told you before, that David, because he saw himself wrongfully condemned by men, made God his judge; the same thing appears more evidently hereby, when he says that he was sound, or uncorrupt with him. True it is, that the scripture sometimes speaks so of holy men, to distinguish them from the hypocrites, with whom it is enough to wear the outward vizor of ceremony. But in this place, David, to disprove untrue reports, appeals without fear to God, which the repetition that follows a little after confirms; *According to the cleanness of my hands before his eyes:* in which words there appears a manifest antithesis between the eyes of God and the confused or malignant view of the world; as if he should say, he heeds not wrongful slanders, so that he be clear before God, whose judgment is not perverted with any malicious or froward affections. Moreover, the soundness which he alleges, is not perfection, but sincerity, which is contrary to dissimulation, which may be gathered from the next member also, where he says, *I have kept myself from mine own wickedness;* for he confesses, by implication, that he was not so clear and free from sinful affections, but that the lewdness of his enemies frequently wounded him. Therefore he had inward war against many temptations, because, as he was a man, it could not be but he felt many prickings of the flesh. But this was the proof of his virtue; that he laid hands on himself, and bridled whatsoever he knew to be against God's word. For no man will go on in the pursuit of godliness, but he that diligently keeps himself from his own wickedness.

26 With the meek thou wilt deal meekly; and with the sound thou wilt deal soundly.

27 With the pure thou wilt be pure; and with the froward thou wilt deal frowardly.

28 For thou wilt save the people that be brought low, and cast down the eyes of the proud.

26 *With the meek.*] He goes on with the same sentiment. For in taking God's grace, by which he had been delivered, to record of his integrity, he triumphs over the blind and

unworthy slanders of his enemies. I confess this is the ordinary course with the hypocrites also: for their prosperous successes elate them so, that they vaunt themselves fiercely against God. But forasmuch as they openly mock God, when he allures them to repentance with his long sufferance, this boasting of David's has no alliance at all with their wicked presumption: for he did not put a specious colouring upon his iniquities, because God bare with him; but he justly took the manifold aids, whereby he had certainly found that God regarded him, for manifest assurances of his favour. And this difference is to be observed; that the ungodly, being inebriated with prosperity, boast without shame, that God is pleased with them, when notwithstanding, setting God aside, they rather sacrifice to fortune: but the faithful, in their prosperity, set forth God's grace from an inward feeling of their conscience. So David in this place boasts that he was helped from heaven, for the rightfulness of his cause: for, first this sentiment must be reconciled with the context; that God, in saving a guiltless person so often from present death, has proved himself by the deed to be gentle towards the gentle, and pure towards the pure; and, secondly, we should elicit from it the general doctrine, that God never disappoints his servants, but deals favourably with them, if they wait for his help in meekness and patience. So said Jacob, Gen. xxx. 33, *God shall make mine upright dealing to return unto me:* the drift is, that the faithful should encourage themselves with good hope to follow after uprightness, because the fruit of every man's righteousness shall redound to himself. The latter member, where God is said to deal frowardly with the froward, though it be somewhat harsh, yet contains no absurdity; yea rather, not without very good reason the Holy Ghost employs this manner of speaking, to awaken the hypocrites and gross despisers of God from their drowsiness. For we see how carelessly the wicked skip over all these things, when the scripture preaches of the sore and dreadful judgments of God, yea and when God himself menaces his terrible vengeance. Therefore this brutish, and as it were prodigious, dulness compels God to coin new forms of speaking, and as it were to put on another character. So also in Levit. xxvi. 21; *If ye shall walk frowardly*, or rashly, *with me, I likewise will walk frowardly*, or at a venture, *against you:* as if he should say, that their frowardness should cause him to forget his accustomed reserve, and to rush upon them on every side; for this stubborn people gain at length by their hardihood, that God hardens himself more and more to bray them into powder, and becomes steely against their stonyness. More-

over, the Holy Ghost, directing his speech to the ungodly, speaketh for the most part according to their own apprehension. And when God thunders at them in good earnest, they transform him in their blind fearfulness, because they conceive nothing in him but cruelty, fierceness, and brutality. Now we see why David does not simply attribute the name and office of a judge to God, but arms him with impetuous violence; according as it is said in the Latin proverb, A tough knot requires a stout wedge.

28 *For thou wilt save the people that be brought low.*] This verse contains a kind of qualification. For, as experience shews that the meek are often severely afflicted, and the pure are wrapped in most sorrowful troubles; lest any man should think it untruly said, that God deals gently with the meek, David warns us that the end must be tarried for; because although God come not at once to succour the good, yet when he hath exercised their patience for awhile, he lifteth up such as are under foot, and delivereth such as are at the point of despair. Whence it follows that it may not be discerned otherwise than by the end, how God dealeth gently and mildly with the meek, and behaveth himself purely towards the pure. For if he kept not the faithful waiting in suspense, it were not his property to save those that are brought low. And it is no small comfort in adversity, for the help of God to be delayed purposely, which otherwise is in readiness, that we may be saved when we are brought low. And we must not think the wrongs we suffer to be too bitter, as they purchase us the favour of God. In the second member, the Song has another reading; for there it is thus; *Thine eyes are against the proud, to cast them down;* but this variety alters not the meaning, saving that, there the Holy Ghost menaceth the proud more openly, that as God watches to overthrow them, they cannot escape falling. But the effect of either place is this: the more carelessly the wicked sooth themselves, and the more insolently they despise miserable persons, who are under their feet, so much the nearer are they to destruction. As often, then, as they cruelly vaunt themselves against us, let us assure ourselves that there is none other impediment why God rebate not their stubborn wilfulness, but because their pride is not yet come to its perfect fulness.

29 For thou shalt light my candle, O Lord: my God shall lighten my darkness.

30 For in thee shall I break through the wedge of a battle; and in my God shall I leap over a wall.

31 The way of God is perfect: the word of the Lord

is tried in the fire; he is a shield to all that trust in him.

32 For who is God but the Lord? and who is strong but our God?

33 It is God that hath girded me with strength, and hath made my way perfect.

29 *For thou shalt light.*] The manner of speech in the Song is a little plainer than it is here; for there God is not said to light his candle, but he himself is called a candle. Nevertheless, the meaning comes to the same; namely, that it came to pass through God's grace, that David being plunged into darkness, returned again into light; for David does not simply thank God for holding a light before him, but for enlightening his darkness. David therefore confesses himself to have been brought into such a strait, that he was like a man forlorn and past hope. For he compares his bewildered estate to darkness. True it is, that this may be applied to the spiritual enlightening of the mind. But meanwhile we must consider what David treats of, lest we step aside from his genuine meaning. And in like manner as he acknowledges himself to have been refreshed with God's favour as it had been with a quickening light; even so let us also, after his example, assure ourselves that there shall be no end of our adversity, until God put away our darkness, and restore us the light of gladness. In the meanwhile let it not grieve to hold out in our journey through the darkness, so that God supply the place of a candle to us. In the next verse he ascribes his victories to God, that by his guiding he brake through the wedges or phalanxes of his enemies, and took their fenced cities by storm. And so we see, that although he was a valiant warrior, yet he arrogates nothing to himself. In the tenses of the verbs let the readers take this warning once for all, that the preter tense and the future tense are used indifferently, now one, and now the other, in this Psalm: not only because David comprehends diverse histories, but also because he represents himself as engaged in an affair which is present to him, and exhibits at the same time the uninterrupted tenor of God's grace.

31 *The way of God is perfect.*] The way of God is taken here, not for his doctrine, but for his manner of dealing with his servants. The meaning therefore is, that God never disappointeth his servants, nor forsaketh them even at the very pinch, as men do, (who help not their dependents except so far as is for their own profit), but faithfully maintaineth those whom he takes into his protection. Howbeit, forasmuch as we should have nothing to do with God, unless he prevented

us with his word; therefore, after David hath avouched that God helpeth his servants in sincerity, he adds, therewithal, that God's word is purified. And we must bear in mind that it is not to be doubted, that God sheweth himself upright towards us in effect, because he hath promised to become our keeper, and his promise is an assured truth. Moreover, it is to be gathered from the next member, where he says that he is a shield to those that trust in him, that by *his word* here is not meant his commandments, but his promises. Surely it seems to be but a common title of commendation, to say that the word of the Lord is clear from all fraud and deceit, like silver that is fined from the dross. But our unfaithfulness makes God's faithfulness highly commended by this similitude; because, whenever the issue is not answerable to our hope, to nothing are we more prone than to have wicked misgivings of God's word creeping immediately upon us. Let the readers seek the rest out of Ps. xii.

32 *For who is God.*] Here David, in scorning the weak inventions of men, who rashly set up tutelar gods to themselves, confirms what I said before; namely, that he never attempted anything but by the warrant and commandment of God. For if he had passed beyond the bounds of his calling, it had not been lawful for him to lay claim to God's support with such boldness. And though he matches the one true God against all forged gods; at the same time he overthrows all the vain hopes wherewith the world is led away from resting upon God. For he treats not here of the bare title of *God*, but he declares that there is no help to be sought for elsewhere, because he only is endued with power. Nevertheless, his purpose, which I have noted, is to be borne in mind; namely, that in setting God, under whose banner he fought, as his captain against all his enemies, he maintains that he had attempted nothing upon lust, or with an evil conscience.

33 *It is God that hath girded.*] It is a metaphor taken either from a sword-girdle or a man's reins, wherein the scripture now and then places a man's vigour or strength; therefore it is the same as if he should say, he was strong by the power of God, whereas otherwise he had been but feeble and weak. Afterwards he speaks of the success itself; because it were not enough for men to be forward and active in mind, nor to excel in strength, unless there followed good success; which heathenish men surmise to proceed from their own prudence, or from fortune; but David ascribes it to the one God. For the way is put for the course of action; as if he should say, whatsoever he took in hand God directed it happily with his blessing.

34 Making my feet like hinds' feet, and it is he that hath set me upon my high places.

35 Teaching my hands to fight; and mine arms shall break a bow of steel.

36 And thou hast given me the shield of safeguard; and thy right hand hath shored me up, and thy mercifulness hath increased me.

37 Thou hast enlarged my paces under me, and mine ankles have not staggered.

Because David had won many holds which were believed to be impregnable from their high and difficult access, he extols God's grace in that behalf; for in saying that he had feet given him like harts' feet, he betokens unwonted swiftness, and such as naturally is not incident to men. The meaning therefore is, that God had helped him in an extraordinary manner, so that he climbed over inaccessible rocks with swift course like a roe. By *his high places*, he means the holds which he had gotten by the law of arms; for he might worthily boast that he possessed nothing which was another man's, inasmuch as he knew himself to be called thither by God. Whereas he says *his hands were taught and trained to fight*, he confesses that his skill in fighting came not by his own industry, exercise, and experience, but was freely bestowed upon him by the singular gift of God. Now although it be generally true, that force and skill in war proceed not but from the secret inspiration of God; yet, immediately after, David shews that he was furnished with valour for all encounters above the common and ordinary manner of men, because his arms were strong enough to break even bows of brass. For admit he had been a well-sinewed man, yet is he described to have been but of a low stature; and the very similitude betokens something surpassing man's strength. In the next verse he declares that he continued safe and sound through the grace of God alone; for, by the *shield of God's safeguard*, he teaches, that if he had not been wonderfully preserved by God, he had been exposed to many mortal wounds; and so the shield of God's safeguard is tacitly opposed to all the coverings and armours wherewith he was fenced. The cause hereof he imputes again to God's free goodness, by which he says he was increased, and more and more forwarded; for by the word *increase*, he betokens the continual advances of God's favour. By the enlarging of his steps, or paces, he means, that he had a level way opened to him, where no way was; for there is an

implied contrast between a large and broad room and narrow straits, out of which a man cannot stir his foot. The meaning is, that when he was brought to utter despair, he was set free again by the help of God. And this is a very profitable warning to correct our distrust; for unless there be before our eyes a pleasant plain in which the flesh may wanton freely, we tremble as though the earth would fail us. Let us bear in mind, then, that it is not in vain ascribed to God's charge, to enlarge our ways, and to make them level. He adds the effect of this grace, that his feet staggered not; that is to say, that he was not thrown down by any mishap.

38 I will pursue mine enemies, and overtake them; and I will not return till I have consumed them.

39 I have smitten them, and they could not rise: they are fallen under my feet.

40 And thou hast girded me with strength unto battle: thou hast bowed down mine enemies under me.

41 And thou hast given me the neck of mine enemies; and thou hast destroyed those that hate me.

In this point is David wholly occupied; namely, to shew, by the event, that God's favour was the cause of all his victories; whence it follows, that his cause was rightful and just. For although God do now and then grant success even to the wicked and ungodly; yet, by the event, he sheweth that he was against them, and offended with them. But as for such signs of his favour as he shewed to David, none but his servants feel them; thereby to assure them, that they are approved and accepted of him. Now, although he seem to speak too soldierlike, when he says he will make no end of slaughter, till he have despatched all his enemies; or rather seems to have forgotten that meekness which ought to shine in all the faithful, that they may resemble their heavenly Father; yet, forasmuch as he attempted nothing without the commandment of God, and forasmuch as he ruled his affections with the bridle of his spirit, we may be assured that these are not the sayings of a sanguinary or cruel person, but of one that faithfully executes the justice which God hath enjoined him. And surely, we know him to have been a man of so great meekness, that it would have gone sore against his heart to have shed even one drop of blood, otherwise than the reason and necessity of his office required. Therefore David's voca-

tion must be considered, and also his pure zeal and freedom from all fleshly perturbation. Moreover, it is to be noted, that those are termed enemies here, whose untameable wilfulness deserved such vengeance of God. For in respect that he represented Christ, he punished not any by death but such as were inflexible, and who could not be brought to order by man's commandment. For the matter itself shews, that he delighted in nothing more than to spare such as repented; like as Christ, alluring all men gently to repentance, with an iron rod breaks in pieces those that wilfully withstand to the last. The sum is, that David, because he fought under God's standard, being chosen king by him, and taking upon him to do nothing but by his commandment, was also aided by God, that he might stand unvanquished against all the assaults of his enemies; yea, or rather put to flight vast and overpowering hosts. Besides this, we must understand that under this figure was shadowed the triumphant state of Christ's kingdom, who, through the assurance of God's power, should always overthrow his enemies, and get the upper hand of them, and continue king in spite of the world. Now, seeing that his victories are common to us also, it follows, that there is promised us an impregnable defence against all the devil's practices, all the machinations of sin, and all the temptations of the flesh. Therefore, although Christ obtain not his peaceful kingdom but by battle, yet let it suffice us, that God's hand is always in readiness for the preservation of it. David truly was an outlaw for a time, so that he had much ado to save his life in dens of wild beasts. But at length God made his enemies turn their backs, and not only put them to flight, but also gave them up to be destroyed. Even so, although our enemies hang upon our necks for awhile, yet will God at length make them not only to turn their backs, but also to perish as they deserve, even before our eyes. In the mean time, let us bear in mind what manner of warfare God calleth us to, with what kind of men he will have us to fight, and with what weapons he armeth us; to the intent it may suffice us to have the devil, the flesh, and sin, thrown down under our feet through his spiritual power. But, to whom he hath given the sword, those will he also maintain, and not suffer them to be wrongfully oppressed, if so be that they reign under Christ as their head. As to the words; the interpreters almost with one consent translate it *the enemies to give back*, instead of, *to put the enemies to flight*. But inasmuch as the Hebrew word עֹרֶף signifies properly a *neck*, the meaning will not be amiss, that God should give David the neck of his

enemies, because he yielded them into his hand to be slain.

42 They shall cry out, and there shall be none to save them: even unto the Lord, but he shall not answer them.

43 And I shall grind them as small as the dust before the wind; as the mire in the streets shall I tread them under foot.

44 Thou shalt deliver me from the strivings of the people; thou shalt make me the head of the heathen. A people whom I have not known, shall serve me.

45 As soon as they hear, they shall obey me: the children of the strangers shall lie unto me.

46 The children of the strangers shall shrink away, *and* tremble in their privy chambers.

42 *They shall cry out.*] The alteration of the time in the verb, breaks not the continuity of the narration. Thus therefore must it be resolved; that although they cried unto God, yet were their prayers rejected. For he pursues what he had said before; namely, that at length it appeared plainly by the event, how falsely his enemies boasted of God's name, who shewed himself to be quite against them. True it is indeed, that sometimes they have been so lifted up with success, that God hath commonly been thought to favour them, at a time when David, crying night and day, availed nothing. But when God had sufficiently tried the patience of his servant, he frustrated them, and disappointed them of their vain hope; yea rather, he vouchsafed not to hear their prayers. Now we have David's meaning. For inasmuch as the ungodly had long wrongfully usurped the name of God, he derides their fallacious boastings. Moreover, it is to be noted, that he speaks here of the hypocrites, who never call upon God with pure affection. For the promise shall never fail, that God is near unto all those that call upon him in truth. Psalm cxlv. 18. David, then, says not that his enemies were shaken off when they resorted to God with an earnest and hearty affection; but when, through their wonted shamelessness, they thought him bound to further their wicked practices. For when the ungodly make bows and supplications in extremity of need, although they pretend humility, because they are cast down with sorrow, and tremble for fear, yet they alter not their purpose so as to amend. Besides this, either they are actuated

by presumption and hardness of heart, instead of faith, or else they pour out their complaints with doubtfulness, rather to importune God, than to repose their trust in his bosom. Nevertheless, hence is to be gathered a profitable warning, that whosoever cruelly vaunt themselves over them that are in distress, and scornfully thrust back the suppliants, shall also find God deaf to their requests. And by the next verse we are taught, that after God hath cast off the ungodly, he exposes them to every indignity, and giveth them up to be trampled under foot like mire. For he not only telleth the cruel and proud, that his ears shall be shut against them; but also threateneth to bring to pass, that they shall be rewarded with the same measure.

44 *Thou shalt deliver me from the strivings.*] David gathers briefly that he had experienced God's help in all ways. For he was like to be in great hazard, by the troubles of his own people, if they had not been appeased by miracle, and the fierceness of the people restrained by force. Again; it happened beyond the expectation of most men, that he, being conqueror far and wide, overthrew the nations that bordered upon him, which had lately in a manner discomfited all Israel. For it was an incredible renovation of things, that he not only suddenly set up the people again, who were dismayed with slaughter; but also made tributary to him those from whom no peace could be obtained. It had been a glorious achievement even if the realm, after the receipt of so great a slaughter, had survived, and gathered so much strength again as to recover its former state; but for God to grant him to subdue his conquerors, was a far more excellent benefit. Both of these does David make mention of; as well that God appeased those intestine commotions, when the people made insurrection against him; as also that his kingdom, which had been maimed and half broken under Saul, was enlarged under the auspices and power of God, by subduing mighty nations to his obeisance. Hereby it appears he was helped no less at home, within his own realm, than against his foreign enemies. Moreover, forasmuch as the Holy Ghost under this figure points out to us the kingdom of Christ, let us know that the means as well to set it up, as to preserve it, is that God stretch out his arm, and not only fight against the professed foes, that rise up against it from without, but also appease the uproars and strifes that breed at home. Which also was plainly shewn in the person of Christ from the beginning. For the first hinderance that he had, was by the insane wilfulness of his own countrymen. And the experience of all ages shews, that the dissensions and strifes,

wherewith hypocrites rend and tear the church, are no less hurtful in undermining Christ's kingdom, than the forcible attempts of foreign foes, if God did not set his hand against them. Therefore, to enlarge and maintain his Son's kingdom, he not only overthrows his foreign foes before him, but also delivers him from intestine dissensions. In the Song, instead of making him *head of the heathen*, there is another word, תשמרני, which signifies to keep. And therefore it is referred to the steady and continual possession of the kingdom. For we know how hard it is to keep those in their duty, who are not yet inured to the yoke. And therefore nothing is more common, than for kingdoms lately conquered to be shaken with new commotions. But in the Song, David avows God to have been the preserver of his estate of sovereignty over the heathen, which he had gotten by his guidance. *A people whom I have not known.* This whole passage fully confirms what I touched just now; namely, that this account is not restrained to the person of David, but is a prophecy concerning Christ's kingdom to come. David might, indeed, have boasted, that nations, whose manners and dispositions he was utterly unacquainted with, were subject to him. But certain it is, that what nations soever he conquered, were neither utterly unknown to him, nor so far distant from him. Wherefore, God did but, as it were under a dark shadow, portray the immeasurable kingdom of his Son, the extent whereof stretches from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, and possesses the whole world. To the same purpose also is what follows; *As soon as they hear, they shall obey me.* For although David had by his victories gotten himself so renowned a name, that many, laying down their arms, voluntarily submitted themselves to him; yet forasmuch as they also were quelled by the terror of arms, which their neighbours had felt to their smart, before their faces, they are not properly said to have offered their obedience at his mere fame. This agrees better with Christ, who subdues the world to him by his word, and at the hearing only of it makes those obedient, who erst were rebels to him. So far, then, as David bare the person of Christ, God subdued under his dominion the farthest nations, and such as erst were unknown to Israel in respect of intercourse. But, that was but a prelude to the sovereignty promised to Christ, the bounds whereof should be extended to the uttermost coasts of the world. David had purchased himself so great a fame by feats of arms and warlike prowess, that many of his enemies, disheartened by fear, submitted themselves to him. But thus under a type was shewn the sub-

jection of the Gentiles, who were brought to submission by the mere preaching of the Gospel. For the obedience of faith, in which the dominion of Christ is founded, *cometh by hearing* Rom. x. 17.

46 *The children of strangers.*] In this place is described that which is commonly wont to happen in new dominions; namely, that such as are subdued pay humble homage to their conqueror, but with feigned and constrained lowliness, because they obey from fear, and not good will. For the interpreters who refer the word *lie* to another sense, as if he should say, the enemies were deluded with vain hope, or had lyingly denied themselves to have practised any enmity, in order to escape punishment, seems not to express David's mind sufficiently. Therefore, in my judgment, it is taken generally, to be humbled after a slavish manner. For the word כחש, which in Hebrew signifies *to lie*, imports sometimes metaphorically as much as, to be humbled, or to take the yoke of obedience, but still after a feigned and insincere manner. And he terms those the children of the stranger, or of strangers, who, being before independent, were utterly divided from Israel. And this we see fulfilled in Christ also, to whom many come as suppliants, but with a double and false heart; whom the Holy Ghost, in that respect, aptly calls strangers born: because, although they are mingled with the elect people, yet they grow not into the same body with them by unfeigned faith, so that they should be accounted children of the church. True it is, indeed, that all the heathen were, at the beginning, strangers; but when they put on new affections, then they that before were strangers and aliens, become fellow-citizens of the saints, and members of God's household. That which follows immediately after, namely, *The strange children shall shrink away, and shall tremble out of their privy chambers,* exalts that terrible name, whereof we have spoken before. For it is no ordinary sign of reverence, that those who are protected by lurking-holes, and inclosed within fortifications, should be so stricken with fear as to come forth of their own accord. And as fear drew David's enemies out of their places of covert, and made them meet him with submission, even so the Gospel strikes the unbelievers with such fear that it compels them to yield obedience to Christ. For, as Paul witnesses, 1 Cor. xiv. 24, such is the force of preaching, that by reproving men's consciences, and by laying open the secrets of their hearts, it casts down with fear those who were rebellious before, and forces them to give glory to God.

47 Let the Lord live; and blessed be my strength; and the God of my welfare be exalted.

48 It is God that giveth me power to avenge me, and subdueth the people under me.

49 My deliverer from mine enemies; thou hast set me up even from them that have risen up against me: thou hast rid me from the cruel man.

50 Therefore will I praise thee, O Lord, among the nations, and sing unto thy name.

51 He worketh mightily the welfare of his king; and performeth mercy to David his anointed, and to his seed for ever.

47 *Let the Lord live.*] If it is thought fit to read it in the optative mood, *O that the Lord might live*, it would be a harsh manner of speaking; but it might be excused, as borrowed from men whose custom it is thus not only to wish well but also to extol their captains with an applauding acclamation, and so it would be as it were a triumphal benediction. Nevertheless, it might not improperly be a simple affirmation, wherein David affirms God to live, that is to say, to be endued with sovereign power. But this *living* is not restrained to God's being, but rather is to be estimated by his works, which shew to us that he liveth. For, as soon as he hath withdrawn his working from our eyes, the feeling and perception that he liveth vanishes out of our minds. Therefore he is said to live, in respect that by evident proofs of his power, he sheweth how the world is contained in his hand. Now, because David had felt this life of God by experience, he honours it with praise and thanksgiving. For, if we read it in the present tense, *the Lord liveth*, the copulative *and*, which follows, imports an inference: and therefore it were to be resolved thus; *The Lord liveth, and therefore blessed be my strength.* But the addition of *my strength*, and afterwards of *my welfare*, confirms what I said before; namely, that God liveth not in respect of himself alone, but puts forth his power in the government of the whole world. For the Hebrew word צור, is put transitively in this place for him that giveth strength.

48 *It is God that giveth me power to avenge.*] Again he acknowledges himself to have received his victories at God's hand. For, as he could never have looked for them but by the help of God, so now he acknowledges him the only au-

thor of them. And lest he might seem to besprinkle him but with a portion of his praise in a careless manner, he repeats, in express words, that he had nothing but that which he hath given him. And, first of all, he confesses himself to have been furnished with the heavenly power, to the end he should take such revenge on his enemies as they deserved. Now, forasmuch as at the first blush it might seem absurd that God should arm the faithful to vengeance, as I told you before, David's calling is to be borne in mind. For he was no private person; but inasmuch as he was a king, the judgment which he executed was commanded him by God. Whosoever receives wrong, if he start out to revenge himself, he usurps the office of God. And therefore it cannot be without impious rashness that private men should requite their own wrongs. But God, who affirmeth himself to be the avenger, armeth kings and magistrates with the sword, and ordaineth them the ministers of his vengeance. Therefore hath David put avengements for the rightful punishments which it was lawful for him to execute by the commandment of God: still, provided that he were led by the zeal of the spirit, rightly tempered, and not by the headiness of the flesh. For, except such a self-government be joined with their calling, it is in vain for kings to boast that God hath committed vengeance unto them: because it is no less frowardness to abuse the liberty of the sword to the lust of the flesh than to take it in hand without God's leave. There is no other vengeance permitted to the church militant under Christ's banner than against the wilful. We are enjoined to strive with our enemies in benefiting them, and to pray for their welfare. Therefore we must at the same time wish them amendment of life, and soundness of mind, until it plainly appear to be irrecoverably and hopelessly depraved. But till that time, vengeance must be left to the pleasure of God, lest we be carried headlong before the time. Again; from his perils and distresses David gathers, that he could not otherwise have escaped safe, except he had been preserved by the hand of God. For to this purpose makes that lifting up whereof he speaks; namely, that he was wonderfully lifted up, so that he sank not under the violence of his enemies, that had the upper hand of him.

50 *Therefore will I praise thee.*] In this verse he shews, that the benefits of God, which he has received, are worthy of a new and unaccustomed commendation, that their fame may spread even to the heathen. For there is an implied contrast between the ordinary worshipping of God, which the faithful were wont in those days to use in the temple,

and this thanksgiving, which could not be comprehended within so narrow bounds. The meaning, therefore, is this: Lord, I will not only yield thee thanks in the assembly of the faithful, according to the appointed ceremony of the law; but thy praises shall spread further, like as thy grace, bestowed upon me, is worthy to be mentioned over the whole world. Moreover, hence is fetched a prophecy concerning Christ's kingdom to come. For except the heathen had been allured to the fellowship of the chosen people, it had been in vain and foolish to sing the praises of God among such as are deaf. Wherefore Paul both appositely and fitly proves by this text, that the calling of the heathen was not a matter of chance; Rom. xv. 9. For we shall see in many places hereafter, that the church is assigned to be the holy dwelling-place of God's praises. Wherefore God's praises could not rightly and beneficially be set forth anywhere else than in Jewry, until the ears of the Gentiles were opened; which came to pass when God summoned them to him by his Gospel.

51 *He worketh mightily.*] This verse shews plainly, by the effect, why God dealt so bounteously with David; namely, because he had anointed him king. For, in calling himself king, he testifies that he neither rushed in unadvisedly, of his own head, nor was thrust in by wicked factions, but reigned as a lawful king, because it so pleased God. And this he proves by the warranty of anointing; because God, in anointing him by the hand of Samuel, did no less warrant his right to reign, than if he had placed him in the throne royal by putting his hand out of heaven in the open sight of the world. This election, says he, was mightily ratified by a continued series of deliverances; whence it follows, that all those make open war against God who account not his calling to be of sufficient authority. At the same time he ascribes the cause to God's mercy, that we may know that that kingdom was founded upon the mere good pleasure of God. And by this clause appears more openly that which I have said before; namely, that David does not so much make a historical declaration of the wonderful and sundry sorts of God's grace, which he had felt in himself, as prophesy of the everlasting state of his kingdom. And it is to be noted, that by the name of *seed*, there is not meant every one that is David's offspring, but there is noted peculiarly the same successor of his, to whom God had promised to become father. For, inasmuch as it was said before, 2 Kings vii. 12, that his kingdom should continue as long as the sun and moon shone in the heaven, it could not be otherwise but it must descend to such a one

as should be an everlasting king, and not a temporal king. Therefore David commends his seed to us, adorned with so singular a promise as could fully agree neither with Solomon nor any other of his successors, but the only-begotten Son of God; like as the apostle to the Hebrews in the first chapter in the fourth verse declares, that this is a dignity wherein he excelleth the angels. So shall we profit duly in this Psalm, if the shadow may lead us to the substance.

PSALM XIX.

David, minding to exhort the faithful to the consideration of God's glory, first sets before them a mirror of it in the frame of the heavens, and in the singular orderliness of the workmanship thereof; and afterwards calls us back to the law, wherein God has disclosed himself to his chosen people more familiarly. In respect whereof he pursues this peculiar benefit in many words, commending the use of the law; and at length closes the Psalm with a prayer.

[*To the chief chanter. A Song of David.*]

1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the cope of heaven telleth forth the works of his hands.

2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night telleth forth knowledge.

3 There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.

4 Their writing is gone forth unto all the earth, and their words into the uttermost coasts of the world: in them hath he set a pavilion for the sun.

5 And he cometh forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoiceth like a strong man to run his race.

6 His coming out is from the uttermost coast of the heavens, and his going about is upon the uttermost point of the same: and no man is hid from the heat of him.

The skies declare.] I have said already, that there are two parts of this Psalm; in the former of which, David sets forth God's glory from his works; and in the other the knowledge of him, as it is reflected more fully in his word.

Now, although he speak expressly but of the heavens; yet is it not to be doubted, but that under the part that is most noble, and whose excellency is more apparent, he designates the whole workmanship of the world by the figure synecdoche. Certainly, there is nothing so obscure or despised, even in the most confined corners of the earth, wherein there is not some mark of God's might and wisdom to be seen. But because a more express image of him is engraven in the heavens, David chose them especially, that their brightness might lead us to survey the whole world. For as soon as a man shall have acknowledged God by beholding the heaven, he shall learn to consider and to wonder at his wisdom and power even in the minutest plant. In the first verse he repeats one thing twice, after his own manner. For he brings in the heavens as witnesses and preachers of God's glory, attributing to the dumb creature a character that belongs not to it, to upbraid men the more with their unthankfulness, if they should pass over so evident a testimony with unheeding ears. For this manner of speaking does more effectually move and provoke than if he had said that the heavens shew. Of a truth it is a great matter, that there is offered to our eyes a lively image of God, in the brightness of the heavens. But because the utterance of a sounding voice, does better stir up our senses, or at least teaches more certainly, and with much more profit, than simple beholding, whereunto no warning is added, the expressive force of this figure is to be noted, in that he says the heavens tell forth the glory of God by their own preaching. The repetition which is added in the second part, is an exposition. For David shews in what way the heavens declare God's glory to us; namely, because they openly give us to understand, that they are not huddled together by chance, but created wonderfully by some most excellent workmaster. For it cannot be, but that the beholding of the heavens must lift us up to the maker of them himself; and the wonderful orderliness, garnishment and brightness which are there seen, must yield evident record of his providence. The scripture indeed sets forth the time and manner of their creation. But even if God should hold his peace, the heavens themselves cry out, that they were made by his hands; which abundantly suffices to witness his glory. For as soon as we acknowledge God to be the maker of the world, our minds must of necessity be ravished with wonder at his exceeding great goodness, wisdom, and power.

2 *Day unto day.*] Although philosophers more scientifically understand how beautifully the stars are set in

order, so that in so great a multitude of them nothing is confused, yet the continual succession of days is a more certain lesson of God's providence to the rude and unlearned. David therefore descends not here from the heavens to the other parts of the world, but confirms that which he had said lately, by a more sensible and home effect; namely, that God's glory doth not only shine, but also rather resounds in the heavens. Now, although the words may be expounded diversely, yet the sense remains for the most part the same. Many resolve it thus; that there passes no day wherein God shews not some notable proof of his power. And others are of opinion that the augmentations of instruction are denoted, so that the later day should always bring some novelty. Harsher is the construction which some gather, that the days and nights talk together among themselves, and reason concerning the glory of their builder. Nor do I doubt but that by the appointed interchanges of days and nights, David teaches that the course of the sun, moon, and stars, and their revolutions, are governed by the marvellous wisdom of God. And whether we translate it, *from day to day*, or *day to day*, it matters little; because thereby is betokened nothing but the orderly continuance of times, which the succession of days and nights makes. If, indeed, we were as heedful as we ought to be, even one day would be a sufficient witness of God's glory to us; and even one night would perform the same office. But when we see the sun and moon compass the world daily with their going about; the sun by day appearing over our heads, the moon succeeding by turns; the sun to mount up by degrees, and at the same time to approach nearer unto us, and afterwards to take his journey back again, and to depart from us by little and little; and that thereby the length of the days or nights is determined; and that this variation is so ordered according to an uniform law, that it recurs annually; this is a far more evident record. And therefore not without cause does David say, that although God speak no word at all, yet the succession of days and nights so fitly ordered, does proclaim magnificently his glory; and there is no cloak of ignorance left for men, because that, seeing the days and nights do so well supply the office of teachers, they may attain knowledge enough under their guidance.

3 *There is no speech.*] This verse commonly receives two contrary interpretations, both of which, however, are probable. For word for word it is read thus: *No language, no speech, their voice is not heard.* Some connect the two verses together, as though the sentence were carried on to the latter member, *their writing went forth into all the earth, &c.*

Therefore, according to their opinion, the sense should be, that though the heavens be dumb, and not endued with power to speak, yet they preach God's glory with sufficient high and loud voice. But if this were David's meaning, to what purpose served it to repeat three times that theyhave no perfect speech; surely the harping upon a thing known were exceedingly vapid. The other exposition, therefore, as it is more received, so also seems to suit better. For in the Hebrew tongue, which is very concise, somewhat is often to be supplied; and especially it is a common thing with the Hebrews, to leave out the relatives. Besides, this third negation, בלי, denotes rather an exception from the former members; as if it had been said, the diversity of tongues was no impediment but that the preaching of the heavens might be heard. For the diversity of languages causes communication to cease between sundry nations; and makes him who is most eloquent in his own country, either dumb among foreigners, or else barbarous if he essay to speak. Yea, if a man were furnished with the knowledge of all tongues, yet could he not speak to a Greek and a Latin man all at once; but as soon as he shall have directed his speech to the one or to the other, the rest shall not understand him. David, therefore, by a tacit comparison, enlarges the efficacy of this witness which the heavens bear to their maker; as if he should say, Although people differ among themselves in languages, yet the heavens have a common language to teach them all at once; and there is none other hindrance, save their own dulness, that even those who are most strange to each other may profit as it were at the mouth of one teacher.

4 *Their writing is gone forth.*] Here he declares in what sort the heavens do preach unto all nations in common, without difference; namely, because through all the whole earth, men may understand that the heavens are set forth as witnesses to avouch the glory of God. But as theHebrew word קו, signifies sometimes a line, and sometimes a writing, some gather this sense: that the building of the heavens, framed as it were by line and by level, do utter God's glory far and near. But inasmuch as David here metaphorically introduces the beauty of the heavenly frame preaching of God's glory like a learned man, it were a spiritless manner of speech to say, the line of the heavens passes out to the uttermost borders of the earth. Besides this, in the very next member, he adds, that their words are heard everywhere: and what affinity is there between words and the beauty of a building? But if we translate it *writing*, these two things will very well agree, both that God's glory

is written out in the heavens as in an open book, for all men to look upon, and also that they have given them a loud voice, which may come to the ears of all men. And thus we are admonished, that that speech whereof mention has been made before, is, as I may term it, visible; for the heavens speak to men's eyes, and not to their ears; so that David has good reason to compare their beautifulness, so distinctly set in order, to a writing. Now that the word קו signifies a verse in writing, appears sufficiently by Isaiah xxviii. 10. where God, likening the Jews to children that are not of years apt to be taught, saith thus: *It shall be to them, precept to precept, precept to precept; verse to verse, verse to verse; a little while there, a little while there.* Therefore, in my judgment, the meaning is, that God's glory is written in no dark and small letters, but expressed in bright characters, the reading whereof is open and easy to all men. Hitherto I have set forth the native meaning of the prophet; for whereas this part of the Psalm has been wrested to allegories, the readers will easily perceive that there was no reason why it should be so. I told you at first, and it also appears from the context, that before David comes to the law, he sets forth God's glory to be beheld in the workmanship of the world. Now, if of the heavens we make the apostles, and of the sun, Christ, that partition can have place no more. Besides, it were a preposterous order to place the Law after the Gospel in the text. But as nothing is more clear, than that he treats here of the knowledge of God, which is naturally offered to all men in the mirror of the world, I cease from longer discourse of that matter. Only, because these allegorical interpreters have taken occasion from the words of Paul, this knot must be untwisted. Paul, discoursing upon the calling of the Gentiles, takes this for a principle, that *whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved;* and afterwards adds, that he cannot be called upon until he be known by the teaching of the Gospel. Howbeit, as the Jews esteemed it as savouring of a kind of sacrilege, that Paul published the promise of salvation to the Gentiles, he demands, whether they also had not heard? And he answers, that out of this place there was opened to them a school, wherein they might learn religion and the service of God, because the writing of them went forth into all the earth, &c. Surely, Paul would then, absurdly in point of time, have said that the Gospel had been heard through the whole world by the mouth of the apostles, when it had scarcely yet come to a few. Verily, their preaching had not then passed into far countries, but abode yet inclosed

within the bounds of Jewry. Moreover, his drift is not at all doubtful; for he meant to say, that God, many hundred years past, had disclosed his glory to the Gentiles, and that the same was as a prelude to a larger doctrine. For although the state of his chosen people were separate for a time from the heathen, yet it ought not to seem strange, that God at length hath disclosed himself indiscriminately to them both, whom he had heretofore allured in common unto him: according as he says in another place, that at what time God suffered the heathen to wander after their own ways, yet he had not left himself without witness. Acts xiv. 16. Whence we gather, that they were too grossly deceived, who surmised that Paul departed from the literal sense, which the readers shall yet further understand by my commentaries upon that place. *He hath set a pavilion for the sun.* Like as David, out of the whole frame of the world, has chosen the heavens wherein to set forth to view the image of God, because he may better be seen there as on an elevated stage, so now he points us to the sun, placed in highest degree, because in its brightness the majesty of God displays itself more apparently; for although the rest of the planets have also their courses, and as it were their races, and that the firmament comprehends all the fixed stars in its own revolution, yet had it been in vain for David to go about to teach the secrets of astrology to the rude and unlearned. Therefore it was enough for him, in a general way, to reprove the whole world of unthankfulness, if they profited not in godliness by the very beholding of the sun. This is the reason why he says that a tent was pitched for him, and also that he goes out from the one coast of the heaven, and passes swiftly unto the coast over against it. Nor does he dispute captiously among the philosophers concerning the entire path of the sun; but applying himself to every one of the rudest sort, he confines himself within the experience of the eye; and therefore speaks he not of the other half of the sun's course, which is hidden from our sight under our hemisphere. The things that he sets forth to be considered in the sun are three: the beauty and excellency of his shape; the swiftness of his course; and the wonderful power of his heat. He commends his dignity and beauty by the similitude of a bridegroom, and afterwards adds the similitude of a runner; for the swiftness of such as contended in old time in chariots or on foot, in the lists, was wonderful; which, though it came very far short of the swiftness of the sun, yet David could find nothing in the experience of men, which approached nearer to it. Whereas some think that his quickening heat

is denoted in the third member, I approve not of it. Sure it is a wonderful work of God, and a singular proof of his goodness, that the force of the sun, piercing even into the earth, makes it fruitful by his inspiration. But as he says that nothing, or no man, is hidden from the heat thereof, I take it rather to be meant of that violent heat, wherewith as well men as other living creatures, together with plants and trees, are scorched; for no man desires to avoid that quickening heat wherewith we feel ourselves cherished.

7 The law of the Lord is perfect, repairing the soul: the testimony of the Lord is faithful, instructing the little ones in wisdom:

8 The statutes of the Lord are right, and rejoice the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, and giveth light to the eyes:

9 The fear of the Lord is clean, and endureth for ever: the judgments of the Lord are truth, and justified together.

7 *The law of the Lord.*] Now follows the second part of the Psalm. For after that he has shewn all mankind are sufficiently instructed concerning the only one God by speechless schoolmasters, now he attacks the Jews, to whom God had been made better known by his word. For in that the heavens bear witness of him, it leads not men so far as to make them thoroughly learned in godliness, but only avails so far as to make them inexcusable. True it is, that if we were not dull in the extreme, there are instructions enough in the theatre of the world to provoke us to godliness. But because we see not in broad light, this bright resemblance of God's glory would profit us not at all, without the help of his word, although it ought to be to us instead of a loud sermon. And thus to those whom God hath determined to call to salvation, he vouchsafes a singular grace, like as in old time, although he avouched himself to be God unto all men without exception, yet he gave his law to the children of Abraham severally, to endue them with a more certain and more intimate knowledge. Whence it follows, that the Jews are bound with double bond to serve God. For seeing that no ignorance may excuse the heathen, to whom God spake only by his dumb creatures, how much less tolerable is the dulness of them that neglect to hear the voice that proceeded out of his own holy mouth! this, therefore, is his drift; that the Jews, whom God had bound to himself with a more holy bond, should bend themselves the more cheerfully to the

obeying of God. Furthermore, under the name of the law, he not only understands the rule of living righteously, or the ten commandments, but also comprehends the covenant, whereby God had distinguished that people from the rest of the world, and the whole doctrine of Moses, the parts whereof he enumerates afterwards under the terms of testimonies, statutes, and others. Nor would these titles, wherewith he commends the law, agree with the ten commandments alone, unless there came therewith free adoption, and the promises that depend upon the same; and finally, all that whole body of doctrine, whereof consists true religion and godliness. As touching the Hebrew words, I labour not curiously in setting forth the significations of each of them, because it is easy to be gathered from other places, that they are now and then confounded. עדות, indeed, is generally taken for the covenant whereby God, when he had promised to become the God of Abraham, and of his children, stipulates for faith and obedience at their hands in turn. It is therefore a mutual covenant betwixt God and his people. The word פקודים, which, following others, I have translated *statutes*, is by some restrained to ceremonies, but not well, in my judgment, because generally I see it everywhere taken for proclamations and acts of parliament. Therefore the word מצוה, which follows immediately, is almost the same in signification. Of the residue, we shall see in their places. The first commendation of the law, is that it is sound, or perfect; by which word David means, that if a man be duly instructed in the law of God, he wants nothing to perfect wisdom. For although in heathen men's writings there are scattered some true and profitable sentences, and God hath put in the minds of men a certain knowledge of righteousness, yet the corruption of nature causes that there can be found no pure light of doctrine among men, but certain mutilated principles wrapped in the darkness of ignorance. Wherefore, worthily does David challenge this praise for the law, that it contains in it perfect and absolute wisdom. Forasmuch as the conversion of the soul, which he adds soon after, is, out of all doubt, put for the renewal of it, I hesitated not to translate it so. For there are some that reason too subtly in this place concerning man's repentance and reformation. I confess, indeed, that the soul is not created anew by God's law, in suchwise that it is not renewed unto righteousness, but David's plain meaning is to be considered by the way, that like as the soul quickens the body, so also the law is the life of the soul. And he says that the soul is repaired, in allusion to the miserable state in which we are all born. For although there survive still in us certain remnants of

our first creation, yet because no part continues pure from defilement and infection, the thus corrupted state of the soul differs little from death, and tends altogether to death. And therefore, it is needful, that God should succour us by the remedy of his law; not because the letter of the law does it of itself, as afterwards shall be stated more at large, but because God uses his word as an instrument for the renewing of men's souls. When he calls the *testimony of the Lord faithful*, it is a repetition of the last sentence, so that the perfectness of the law, and the faithfulness or truth of his testimony, import the same thing; namely, that when we have yielded up ourselves to be ruled by God's word, there is no peril of straying, because the Lord doth unerringly direct his own this way unto salvation. Learning in wisdom, seems to be added, as the beginning of the reparation of the soul: for since understanding is the most excellent power of the soul, David teaches that the same is to be fetched out of the law, because we are destitute of it by nature. For under the name of *little ones*, he designates not some one sort of men only, as though the rest were wise enough of themselves; but first he warns us, that none are endued with right understanding until they have profited in the law of God. At the same time, also, he shews what manner of scholars God requireth; namely, such as seem fools to themselves, and come down to the state of children, that the loftiness of their own understanding prevent them not from yielding themselves wholly to be taught by the word of God.

8 *The statutes of the Lord.*] Although he seems to say nothing but what is trite, when he calls the statutes of the Lord right; yet, if a man consider the opposition between the rightness of the law, and the crooked ways wherein men entangle themselves by following their own understanding, he will find this title to be of no small weight. We know how much every man is wedded to himself, and how hard it is to pluck the confidence of false wisdom out of our minds. It is therefore a momentous doctrine, that a man's life cannot be ordered aright otherwise than if it be framed according to God's law, without which it is but wandering always in crooked by-ways. Secondly, he adds, *that God's statutes make a merry heart*, because there is no other joy substantial, but the joy of a good conscience; which we then reap when we are certainly persuaded that our life pleases God. In very deed, the wellspring of peace is faith, which reconciles us freely to God. But from hence also arises inestimable joy to the servants of God; that they know they weary not themselves rashly and to no purpose, since they

have God as the judge and approver of their life. To be short; this mirth is set against all lewd enticements and pleasures, which allure wretched souls to their destruction: as if David should say, Whosoever delight themselves in sinning, they procure manifold matter of sorrow to themselves; but unalloyed joy is gotten by following the law of God. In the end of the verse, by teaching that the rule of God's law is pure, and giveth light to the eyes, he gives us to understand, that it is folly to seek the difference of good and ill elsewhere, because whatsoever men devise of themselves, defiles the cleanness of life with the dregs of it; and furthermore, that all their sharp sight is but blindness, and that they wander always in darkness, till they turn their eyes to the light of the heavenly doctrine. Whence it follows, that none other are rightly wise, than such as follow God for their guide and master, and diligently seek the peace which he proffers by his word. But here arises no small question, because Paul utterly overthrows these commendations of the law, which are rehearsed by David. For how stand these things together; that the law should repair men's souls, and yet be a dead and deadly letter? that it should cheer men's hearts, and yet strike them with fear by bringing in the spirit of bondage? that it should enlighten men's eyes, and yet suppress the light within, by casting a veil before it? First, you must bear in mind what I warned you of at the first; that David treats not of the bare commandments, but comprehends the whole covenant, by which God adopted the offspring of Abraham to be his people. Therefore, to the rule of living well, he joins the free promises of salvation, or rather Christ himself, in whom the adoption was grounded. But Paul, who had to deal with perverse interpreters of the law, who separated it from the grace and spirit of Christ, touches only the bare ministry of Moses. And sure we are, that where Christ's spirit quickeneth not the law, the law is not only unprofitable, but also deadly to the disciples thereof; for without Christ there reigns in the law nothing but inexorable rigour, which puts all mankind under God's wrath and curse. Again; there remains in us a rebelliousness of the flesh, which kindles in us a hatred against God and his law, whence flows that sorrowful bondage and dread. These opposite acceptations of the law easily reconcile the apparent disagreement in the words of David and Paul; because Paul's purpose is, to shew what the law is able to do for us by itself alone, so far forth as, without promise of grace, it exacts strictly that which we owe unto God; and David's purpose is to commend the whole doctrine of the

Law, wherewith the Gospel corresponds, and therefore he includes Christ under it.

9 *The fear of the Lord is clean.*] Here, by the word *fear*, is meant the manner of serving God; therefore this word is taken actively for the doctrine which prescribes to us in what wise we ought to fear God. For men for the most part fear God in such sort, that they provoke his wrath more against them by devising false and faulty worshippings. Worthily, therefore, does David, while indirectly condemning men's untoward devices, affirm that the keeping of the law is free from all filthiness; and he adds *that they endure for ever*, as though he should term it the treasure of everlasting happiness. For we see with what blind impetuosity the world pursues transitory things: whence it comes to pass that in catching at the empty shadows of blissful life, they forego the very blessedness itself. In the second member, by ennobling God's commandments with the title of truth, he condemns all things of fondness, whatsoever men take upon them of their own head, without warrant of the law. And surely he could not have stirred us to the following and love of the law better, than by this admonition, that all those who adopt their plan of living without God's law, beguile themselves, and follow nothing but mere impostures. But in my judgment they are deceived, who restrain this word *judgments* only to the commandments of the second table, since it is David's purpose to commend, in sundry manners of speaking, the fruit which the faithful reap from God's law. Whereas he says, they are *justified together*, it implies as much as that they are all rightful without exception. By this commendation he distinguishes God's law from all worldly doctrines, for no blemish or fault can be found in it, but it is sound and perfect in all points.

10 More to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

11 Moreover, by them is thy servant made circumspect: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

Now he commends the law of God as well for the preciousness, as for the sweetness thereof. And this commendation depends upon what went before: for the advantages which he has just rehearsed, being so many and so great, worthily deserve that we should despise gold and silver, and esteem the heavenly doctrine as the highest and only treasure. Instead of *fine gold*, some translate it *jewel*, but the more received interpretation is, gold that is pure,

and thoroughly fined; which interpretation many places of the scripture confirm. The name is derived from פָּזַז, which signifies, to strengthen; whence we may conjecture, that here is not meant the gold of any one country, as of Ophir, but gold that is fined by workmanship. Yea rather, it appears by Jer. x. 9. that the land of Uphaz took its name therefrom, because it had mines of most fine gold. The original of the word *Obrizon*, by which the gold is termed, is uncertain, saving that Jerome guesses it is so called as though it were *Ophrizon*, that is to say, brought out of the land of Ophir. The conclusion of all is this; that the law is not esteemed according to its just desert, except we prefer it before all the riches of the world. Now, if this estimation take place with us, it will easily purge our minds of the overmuch desire of gold and silver. Moreover, to this reverence there must needs be added love and delight, so that the law shall not only compel us to obedience, but also sweetly allure us: which cannot be, unless thereby are corrected the delights of the flesh, wherewith it is no marvel for us to be ensnared, so long as the righteousness of God is rejected by our morbid taste. Furthermore, we may gather hence that he treats not of the bare commandments and the dead letter; but that the promises, whereby grace is offered, are comprehended therewith. For if the law should but put men in fear by commanding, how could it be an object of love. Certainly, if the law be separated from hope of forgiveness, and from the spirit of Christ, it is so far off from the sweetness of honey, that it would rather slay the wretched souls with its bitterness.

11 *Moreover, by them.*] Although this saying may be extended generally to all the godly, yet it is rightly understood concerning David himself, to the end he might testify that whatsoever he has taught heretofore, he knows by his own experience. And surely, no man shall ever treat truly and earnestly of the heavenly doctrine but he that hath it fixed deep in his heart. David therefore acknowledges, that what prudence soever he has to rule and frame his life, he has gotten it by the law of God. And although he speak personally of himself, yet he sets forth a general rule in his own example, that if the method of good behaviour and conversation be sought, the law of God alone is enough and more than enough; from which, as soon as a man steps aside, his course is subject to many errors. And it is to be noted, that David, by turning his discourse on a sudden to God, cites him as a witness of his saying, to make men believe the more certainly, that he speaks sincerely, and from the bottom of his heart. Now, because the word זָהַר signi-

fies as well to teach, as also to beware, some translate it *thy servant is taught*, or *warned*, by the commandments of the law. But as it carries a fuller meaning with it, to say that he who has submitted himself to be governed by God, is made circumspect, or wary, I preferred this translation. In the second member he shews that whosoever yield themselves to God, to keep the righteousness which he commands, never lose their labour, because great reward is laid up in store for them. Again, this is no small commendation of the law; that in it the Lord covenants with us, and after a sort binds himself, to recompense our obedience: for although he may lawfully exact of us whatsoever the law contains, yet of his free bounteousness he promises his servants reward, which they deserve not. True it is indeed, that the promises of the law are made void through our default; because even he that is most perfect falls far short of full righteousness, and men can look for no reward of their works until they have done full as much as the law requires. Thus these two things agree well together; namely, that eternal life shall be the reward of righteousness if a man fulfil the law in all points; and yet, notwithstanding, that a cursedness is denounced against all men in the law, because all the whole world is destitute of the righteousness of works. Which thing will appear soon after by the next verse: for after David has commended this benefit of the law, that it offers plentiful reward to such as serve God; forthwith turning his discourse another way, he cries out, Who knoweth his own misdeeds? and thereby pronouncing all men liable to everlasting death, he utterly confounds whatsoever confidence can be conceived from men's deservings. If any man object that it is in vain to adorn the law with this commendation, which it has no claim to in effect, the answer is ready; that forasmuch as in the covenant of adoption there is included free forgiveness of sins, whereupon depends the imputation of righteousness, there is yielded reward, though undeserved, to the works of the faithful. For what God promises in the law to the perfect observers of righteousness, that do the faithful obtain by his fatherly forbearance, while he accepts their endeavour, and godly desire of obeying, for the perfection of righteousness.

12 Who can understand his faults? Cleanse me from my secret faults.

13 Withhold thy servant also from presumptuous sins, that they overmaster me not: then shall I be sound, and shall be cleansed from much wickedness.

14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.

This exclamation shews how the promises of the law, which have a condition annexed to them, ought to be taken; namely, that as soon as they come forth, every man should examine his own life, and see that not only his deeds, but also his thoughts, are according to that perfect rule of righteousness which is set forth in the law. So will it come to pass, that each one perceiving his hope of reward to be cut off, must of necessity flee to God's mercy. For it is not enough to consider what the doctrine of the law contains; except we come also to our own persons, wherein default shall be found. As soon as the papists hear, *He that doeth these things shall live in them*, Levit. xviii. 5, without further regard they immediately connect eternal life with the desert of their works, as if it lay in their own power to perform the law, whereof we are all transgressors, not only in some one little point, but also in all its parts. And therefore David, hampered as it were in a maze, acknowledges with astonishment that he is overwhelmed with the multitude of his sins. First of all, then, it is to be borne in mind, that forasmuch as we are destitute of the righteousness of the law in our own persons, we are also, in consideration thereof, excluded from the hope of the reward promised in the same, and, moreover, stand bound as guilty before God, not of one or two faults, but of innumerable; so that our depravity is to be bewailed with most bitter sorrow, for that it not only bereaves us of God's blessing, but also turns life into death: according as there is no doubt but that David, after he had said that God offers grace liberally to all men that observe the law, was stricken with so horrible a fear that he brake out in this expression. By the word שגיאות, or errors, some think is denoted lesser faults: but, in my judgment, David meant simply to say that we are involved in more delusions of Satan than that any man can perceive the hundredth part of his own miseries. Truly, the saints do oftentimes offend through error and inadvertence, but it happens also that, involved in the snares of Satan, they perceive clearly not even gross sins. Therefore, the term errors is properly applied to those sins in which they indulge from their own dulness, and because they are beguiled by the enticements of the flesh. For, in citing himself and others before the judgment-seat of God, he warns them that although their consciences condemn them not, yet are they

not therefore acquit, because God seeth far more sharply than men's consciences, so that even they that look most narrowly to themselves, pass over the greatest part of their guilt. To confession is annexed craving of forgiveness; for the word *cleanse* is referred, not to the gift of regeneration, but to free forgiveness: for נקה signifies to be guiltless. And now he explains his meaning more clearly concerning errors; terming those hidden or secret faults, in which men beguile themselves; and that not spontaneously, and because they have studiously sought after blandishments, but because they cannot carry their inquisition so far as God can. Moreover, to justify us, the pretence of ignorance is but vain, neither availeth it aught to be blind, on the ground that no man is a competent judge in his own case. Cleanness, therefore, is to be sought for by God's acquittal. Now if the faults that we have forgotten must needs come into God's judgment, unless they be done away by pardon, how shall he escape unpunished who, upon the accusation of his own conscience, is compelled to be his own judge? Further, it behoves us to bear in mind, that we are not guilty of some one offence only, but overwhelmed with an innumerable heap. For the more narrowly each man searches into himself, the more shall he acknowledge with David, that there will be no measure or end, if God should uncover our secret faults: because no man is able to comprehend how many ways he is guilty. Whence it appears also, what careless hypocrisy has bewitched the papists, with whom it is an easy and ready matter to gather all their sins once a year into a bundle. The decree of the Lateran council commands men to confess all their sins once a year, and no hope of forgiveness is left but upon that condition. Each man, by whispering in the priest's ear, believes he gets off bravely; as though the sins that he has committed all the year long, could be reckoned up upon his fingers, whereas even the holy ones, by strict examination, can scarce come to the remembrance of the hundredth part, and therefore agree with one voice in this saying of David, *Who can understand his faults?* Neither avails it to except that it is enough if each man do as much as in him lies; for since it is impossible to perform that which the law commands, it must of necessity happen that whosoever is endued with earnest feeling of the fear of God, must be overwhelmed with despair, so long as he thinks himself to be bound by this necessity; and that they who disburden themselves of their sins by this method, are altogether besotted. I know some expound it otherwise, that God should call him back from his errors by the

direction of his Spirit. But this praying is referred, further, to forgiveness, like as that which follows in the next verse implores aid to overcome temptations, and the help of the Holy Ghost. *From presumptuous sins*, says David, *withhold thy servant;* meaning by *presumptuous sins*, open transgressions, wherewith there is joined wilfulness. By the word *withhold*, he intimates, that such is the propensity of the flesh to sin, that even the saints lose their firmness, or rather are carried headlong, except God withhold them, and keep them back. And it is to be noted, that although he term himself the servant of God, yet he acknowledges himself to have need of a bridle, lest he should break out into wilful transgressing of God's law. For although, being born anew of God's Spirit, he groaned under the burden of his sins, yet knew he how great the stubbornness of the flesh is, and how easily forgetfulness of God creeps upon men, whence springs contempt and ungodliness. Now, if David were not free from peril of transgressions, who had so greatly profited in the fear of God, how shall the fleshly man rule himself by his own free will, in whom innumerable lusts reign? Let us learn, then, to be afraid of ourselves, although the unruliness of the flesh be subdued by denial of ourselves. For unless God withhold us, our pride will boil out furiously against God. And this meaning is confirmed by a reason soon after added, *lest they overmaster me*. For by this saying he evidently affirms, that he shall not only be unable to resist unless God help him, but also shall be utterly enslaved to the tyranny of his own wickedness. This place therefore teaches, not only that all mankind are naturally in bondage unto sin, but also that the very faithful would become bondslaves of sin also, save that God waits continually to govern them, and gives them strength to hold out in steadfastness. Also there is given here another profitable lesson, that we must never pray to obtain forgiveness without craving therewith to be armed thenceforth with God's power, lest temptations get the mastery of us. And although we be goaded with the incitements of concupiscence, yet must we not be fainthearted, but pray to God to restrain us. No doubt David could have wished to feel no sinful motion in himself: but forasmuch as he knew he should never be rid from the dregs of sin, until he had put off his corrupt nature, he requires to be armed to the battle with the grace of the Spirit, lest iniquity should overmaster him and reign over him. In the end of the verse there are two things to be noted: for in that David affirms that he shall then be sound and clean from much wickedness, first he attributes this honour to God's spiritual de-

fence, that upon trust thereof he warrants himself victory against all the armies of Satan. Secondly, he confesses that unless God help him he must needs be overwhelmed with the immeasurable multitude and accumulation of mischiefs. Nor does he say that he shall be clean from one wickedness or two, but from many: whence it follows, that as soon as we are destitute of God's grace, there is no kind of sin wherein Satan will not entangle us. Let this confession of David, therefore, quicken in us earnestness in praying; because it is not for us to be drowsy among so many and diverse snares. Again; let the aforesaid godly glorying predominate in our hearts; namely, that although Satan assail us with many and strong armies, yet, if God aid us, we shall continue unvanquished, and stand in suchwise, that our integrity shall abide unimpaired.

14 *Be acceptable.*] He desires more expressly to be fenced with God's grace, that he may lead a righteous and holy life. For the effect is, that God should not only withhold him from transgressions, lest he might burst out into the outward deed, but also that he should at the same time frame his tongue and his mind to the obedience of his law. We know how hard a thing it is, even for the most perfect, so to bridle their words and thoughts that they may neither think nor speak anything against the will of God: and yet this inward pureness is chiefly exacted of us in the law. Now, then, the rarer virtue this continence of heart and tongue is, so much the more may we learn how needful it is for us to be governed by the Spirit, to order our life rightly and honestly. By the word *acceptable*, he shews that there is none other rule of living well, than for men to endeavour to please God, and to become approved before him. When in the close he is called the God of his strength, and his Redeemer, it appertains to his confidence of obtaining.

PSALM XX.

This is a general prayer of the church for the king of Israel, that God should help him at his need: and for the state of his kingdom, that he should maintain it in safety, because that in his person is centred the welfare of the whole realm. Whereunto is annexed a promise, that God will be the stay of that kingdom whereof he was the founder, so as to keep continual watch for the preservation of the same.

[*To the chief chanter. A Psalm of David.*]

2 The Lord hear thee: in the day of trouble the name of the God of Jacob defend thee.

3 Send thee help from his sanctuary, and strengthen thee from out of Sion.

Although the title shew that the Psalm was of David's composition, yet is it no absurdity that he speak of himself in the person of another man. For inasmuch as the office of a prophet was enjoined him, he did well in setting out a form of praying for the faithful; not so much to commend himself by his power to command, or princely authority, as to shew, in virtue of his office of teaching, that it pertained to the whole church to desire and endeavour, that that kingdom might continue safe which God had set up. And whereas many interpreters restrain this prayer to one peculiar time, I approve it not. It may be that the first occasion thereof grew upon some one battle, whether it were against the Ammonites or against some other enemies. Notwithstanding, in my judgment, it was the purpose of the Holy Ghost to deliver to the church an ordinary form of praying, which, as we gather from the words, was employed as often as any danger was likely to ensue. Howbeit, although God commands his children in general to pray for kings, yet this kingdom had a character peculiar and distinct from all others, because God had determined not to govern and maintain his people otherwise than by the hand of David and his seed. But especially it is to be noted, that under the figure of his temporal kingdom there was described a far better government, whereupon depended the full joy and felicity of the church. David, therefore, had an eye purposely to this point; to exhort all the children of God to have a godly care of Christ's kingdom, which might stir us up continually unto prayer.

2 *The Lord hear thee.*] The Holy Ghost bringing in the people praying to God to grant the king his heart's desire, at the same time puts the kings themselves in mind of their duty to call upon God for help in their affairs. By naming the day of trouble, he shews that they shall not be exempted from disquietude, lest their hearts might fail them if at any time they happened to be in peril. The sum is, that the faithful, lest the body should be separated from the head, further the king's prayers with their common supplications. That the name of God is put for God himself, is not without good reason: for as it is not possible for us to comprehend God's being, it is meet for us to trust in him so far forth as his grace and power are manifested unto us. Therefore, out of his name springeth a confidence in calling upon him. The faithful, then, desire to have the king defended by the help of that God whose name is called upon among the sons of Jacob. For I agree not with such as suppose that mention is made of the patriarch whom God had exercised in a manner not much unlike his servant David. I rather suppose that, according to the ordinary custom of the scripture, by this expression is denoted the chosen people of God, because it was also a part of their adoption to live under the protection of a king that was set over them by God himself. And hence we must hold to the spiritual application which I have touched upon before. For since Christ our king, according to the office of his everlasting priesthood, ceaseth not to make intercession with God, it is meet that the whole body of his church should join in concert with his prayers, even as also there is no hope for us to be heard, except he go before us. And it is no small comfort to the assuaging of our sorrows, that as often as we are afflicted he accounteth our troubles as his own, on condition that we forget not to keep our spirits firm in tribulation; because it is told us here beforehand, by the mouth of the Holy Ghost, that Christ's kingdom shall be subject to dangers and annoyances.

3 *Send thee help.*] That is to say, succour thee out of Mount Sion, where he commanded the ark of the covenant to be settled, and chose himself a dwelling-place. For as the weakness of the flesh will not suffer men to fly up into heaven, he comes down to meet them, and by outward exercises of faith, shews himself to be near at hand to them. So the ark of the covenant was to the people of old time a pledge of his presence, and the sanctuary an image of heaven. But as God, by assigning Mount Sion to be the place where the faithful should continually worship him, had joined the kingdom and priesthood together, doubtless

David had an eye to this holy bond. And hence I conjecture, that this Psalm was composed by David in his old age, about the close of his life. For whereas some suppose it to be spoken of Sion, in the way of prophecy, before the place was chosen there for the ark to abide in, it seems strained and hardly probable.

4 Remember thine offerings; and make thy burnt sacrifice fat. Selah.

5 Grant thee according to thine heart, and fulfil all thy purpose.

6 That we may rejoice in thy welfare; and set up a banner in the name of our God, when the Lord shall perform all thy requests.

4 *Remember.*] I take this word *remember* to import, to regard, as it does in many other places. So also to *forget* imports often, to neglect, or not to vouchsafe to regard or behold one. The effect is, that God should shew, by the very deed, that the king's sacrifices were acceptable to him. There are put here two several sorts of sacrifices, that is to say, מנחה, which was the appointed appurtenance for garnishing of all offerings, and was also offered by itself; and, secondly, the holocaust, or whole burnt sacrifice. But it was David's mind, by the figure synecdoche, to denote all sacrifices, as also under the name of sacrifices he comprehended all vows and prayers. For we know that as often as the fathers prayed that were under the law, their hope of obtaining was grounded upon their sacrifices, as also at this day our prayers are not otherwise acceptable to God than so far forth as Christ bedews and hallows them with the sweet scent of his own sacrifice. Therefore the desire of the faithful is, that the king's solemn prayers, which were joined with burnt sacrifices and oblations, should avail to his prosperous success, which is gathered also more evidently from the next verse, where they commend to God the desires and counsels of the king. Now as it were against reason to request God to grant vain and wicked desires, it is to be considered as a principle, that the king is here described not as given to his own ambition, not burning with covetousness, nor catching at everything according to his own lust, but wholly bent on the charge enjoined him, and devoted to the welfare of his whole realm, so that he requires nothing but by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and by the appointment of God's own mouth.

6 *That we may rejoice.*] This verse might also be translated two other ways, according as some make a prayer of it; as if it had been said, Lord, make us to rejoice. And some others think that the faithful, having done their duty in praying, raise up themselves to good hope; or rather, that being already raised up with assured hope, they after a sort proceed to triumphing, like as David from time to time mingles such kind of rejoicings with his prayers, thereby to increase his cheerfulness in continuing his course. But having weighed all more strictly, I am of opinion that the end or fruit of God's grace is denoted, and therefore I thought that the part of speech *that* was to be supplied. For the faithful, in order the more easily to obtain God's favour for their king, do set forth their common gladness and thanksgiving, as if they should say, the care which they take is not for the welfare of any one man, but for the profit of the whole church. As for the expression, *in thy welfare,* although it may be referred as well to God, as to the king, because it is oftentimes called the welfare of God, which God bestoweth upon us; yet the context requires, that it should rather be understood of the king. For inasmuch as the people lived under the shadow of the king, like as Jeremiah says, Lam. iv. 20, therefore the faithful now testify, that as long as he is safe and in prosperity, so long shall they be all glad and happy. And by the way, that they may put a difference between their joy and the heathenish dancings, they profess that they will set up a banner in the name of God. The Hebrew word signifies as much as *vexillare,* if that word were allowed among the Latins; that is, to set up a flag. And the meaning is, that the faithful will acknowledge God's grace, and celebrate the triumph of it.

7 Now know I that the Lord hath saved his anointed: he will hear him from the heavens of his sanctuary, in the mightiness of the defence of his right hand.

8 Some in chariot, and some in horses: but we will be mindful of the name of the Lord our God.

9 They are made to stoop, and are fallen; but we are risen, and set upright.

10 Save, Lord: let the king hear us in the day that we call upon him.

7 *Now know I.*] Now follows the rejoicing, wherein the faithful declare they have felt God's goodness in maintain-

ing the king's welfare. At the same time, however, is annexed a doctrine of faith, that God hath shewed in very deed, that it was by his power that David's kingdom continued, because it was founded upon his calling. The meaning therefore is, that it appeared by certain experience that God is the maintainer of that kingdom whereof he himself was the setter up and founder. For David is honoured with the title of the Messias to this end, that the faithful should persuade themselves that he was the lawful and holy king, whom God had testified by outward anointing to be chosen by himself. Now then, that David had been delivered out of exceeding great perils, the faithful ascribe to God's grace, and at the same time allege the cause, that it was God's will to shield and defend the man under his protection, whom he had commanded to be anointed king of his people. And they confirm their hope of the future yet more evidently in the other member, that God will hear him out of heaven. For I keep still the future tense of the verb, because I doubt not but they extend the proof, which God had given already, to the continual upholding of his kingdom. But here is made mention of another sanctuary, that is, a heavenly; for as God in those days vouchsafed to come down to the people by the ark of the covenant, that he might be more familiarly known to them, so also was it his will again, to draw the minds of his servants upwards to himself, that they should not conceive anything carnal or earthly of him, and that they might know he was above all the world. And so under the visible sanctuary, that was made by man's hand, is commended God's fatherly lovingkindness and his familiar conversation which he hath with his people; and under the sanctuary of the heavens, is commended his exceeding great power, dominion, and majesty. *In the mightiness of the defence, &c.*, imports as much as if he had said, *his mighty defence*, or *his helping power*. Thus in the very expression there is a transposing of the words. But the sense comes to this; that God, through his wonderful power, should preserve the king that was anointed by his commandment; for the Spirit, which hath endited this prayer, saw he would be exposed to so many furious attempts of Satan, that no ordinary means could support him. Notwithstanding, I disapprove not the other exposition; namely, that the faithful, to encourage themselves the better, assure themselves that the defence of God's right hand is in mightiness, that is to say, sufficiently strong to overcome all manner of impediments.

8. *In chariot.*] I restrain not this to the enemies of Israel, as other interpreters do; but rather I suppose that the

faithful are contrasted with the rest of the world. For we see it natural almost in all men, that according as each is endued with wealth, power, and warlike force, so he conceives the greater courage and confidence. The people of God therefore protest that they reposed not their hope, after the common fashion of men, in armour or warlike furniture; but only in the aid of God. And forasmuch as the Holy Ghost opposes these two to each other; it is to be noted, that as soon as fleshly confidence possesses our minds, it after a sort induces forgetfulness of God. For it cannot come to pass that he who promises himself victory in confidence of his own strength, should have an eye to God. Therefore the prophet uses the word *mindful*, to shew that the faithful flee not to God but when they are disburdened of all impediments. Moreover, this mindfulness of God doth first withdraw the faithful from fond presumption, how much soever they excel in power and ability; so that they look not for aught from any quarter but the mere grace of God. Again; if they are bereft and utterly destitute of all succour, yet does it hearten them to call upon God fearlessly and constantly. Like as, on the other hand, when heathenish men excel in power and wealth, they are so blinded with pride, that they hesitate not to despise God without any apprehension of harm; and if they happen to be brought low, they are miserably dismayed. Finally, the Holy Ghost here commends to us the remembrance of the name of God, which keeping still its force as well in nakedness as in the fulness of power, subdues the fond hopes wherewith the flesh is wont to be puffed up. Because the word נזכיר is in the conjugation *Hiphil*, some expound it transitively, we shall cause to be remembered. But as it is no new thing among the Hebrews for words to be put neutrally which properly are transitive, I have embraced that which best suited the present place.

9 *They are made to stoop.*] It is probable that in this place the enemies of Israel are pointed out as it were with the finger, which were overthrown by the power of God, when they thought nothing less likely. And there is a latent antithesis between the fierceness wherewith his enemies were lifted up for awhile, when they stept in stoutly to make havock of all things, and the oppression of God's people. For like as to rise up belongs to those only that were down, so they are properly said to be made to stoop and to fall, whom their own carelessness had lifted up on high before. Therefore the prophet teaches by the event, how much more it is for our advantage to apply all our hope to God alone, than to lean on our own power.

10 *Save, Lord.*] Some read in one sentence, *Lord, save the king;* perhaps because it seems to them against reason, that what is proper unto God, namely, to be called upon, and to hear men, should be transferred to an earthly king. But if we cast our eyes upon Christ as we ought to do, it will be no marvel that what is peculiar to him should by a similitude be attributed to David and his offspring, in so far as they represented the person of Christ. Now as God ruleth and preserveth us by the hand of him, we must not look for salvation anywhere else, even as also in old time the faithful were wont to flee to their king as the minister of God's saving grace. Hence comes that saying of Jeremiah, Lam. iv. 23, which I have cited before; namely, *the bredth of our mouth, the Anointed is, of whom we have said, under thy shadow shall we live among the heathen.* And therefore as oft as God promiseth restitution to his church, he setteth forth a warrant of his defence in the kingdom. Now we see it is with very good reason that the faithful are brought in craving help of their king, to whose protection and custody they are committed, and who is set over them to be their head instead of God. Like as Micah says, ii. 13; *Their king shall pass by them, and the Lord upon their head.* By which words he intimates that their king shall be as a glass, wherein the image of God may shine to them. Now, to return to the present place; the elliptical expression, *Save, Lord,* carries a greater force with it than if the name had been added; because by this means David shews that this defence pertains universally to the whole body of the church. And in the Psalm cxviii. 15. there is made a prayer in the same form of words, which is assuredly the same as this. The effect is, that God by blessing his king would shew himself the preserver of the whole people. Afterwards is expressed the manner of preserving; that the king should be furnished with God's power, to deliver his people as often as they shall call upon him for help, because God had not promised that his people should be saved any otherwise than by his hand and operation. In these days, now that Christ is manifested, let us learn to yield him this honour, not to hope for any other defence than such as he shall bring us from the Father. And of this shall we then truly become partakers, when all of us being gathered together into one body under our universal head, shall have mutual care one of another, and not every man consult for himself alone.

PSALM XXI.

This Psalm contains a public thanksgiving for the happy state of the king. And the meaning of this and the last is much alike. For as in that was set forth a common form of praying, that the whole people might be careful for the welfare of their head; so here is shewn that the whole realm ought to be glad of the safe estate of their king, because it was God's will by this means to preserve the whole body in safety. But especially the Holy Ghost hath directed the minds of the faithful to Christ, who was the end and perfection of this kingdom; that they should know, that they could not otherwise be saved, than under the head ordained by God.

[*To the chief chanter. A Psalm of David.*]

2 Lord, in thy strength shall the king rejoice; yea how greatly shall he rejoice in thy defence!

3 Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not denied him the request of his lips. Selah.

4 For thou shalt prevent him with blessings of good: thou shalt set a crown of gold upon his head.

Lord, in thy strength.] David could have given thanks to God privately for the victories and other notable gifts wherewith he had been honoured; but he purposed to witness, not only that God was the founder of his kingdom, but also that whatsoever God had bestowed upon him, redounded to the profit of all. In the commencement the faithful persuade themselves that David was created king by the appointment of God, in suchwise that God himself taketh upon him especially to preserve him. Therefore it seems that this Psalm was made to this end also, that they should feel assured of the stability and continuance of God's grace, like as they must needs continue with unshaken confidence to hope well of their king, whose countenance was a mirror of God's mercy and favour towards them. And the sense of the words is, Lord, if thou maintain the king with thy power, thou shalt bring to pass that through thee he shall continue safe, and so, ascribing his welfare to thy might, rejoice in thee, after no common sort. For there is no doubt he hath put *strength* and *defence* for mighty and strong help; meaning thereby that God's might in defending the king should be such, that it should maintain

him safe and free from all danger. In the second verse is noted the cause of rejoicing; because God had heard the prayers of the king, and granted him whatsoever he had wished; for it was good for them to hold fast this, and to have it deeply graven on their hearts, that all David's successes were so many benefits of God, yea and avouchments of his lawful calling. And verily in these words David testifies, that he had not given loose to desires of the flesh, as worldly men do who set their minds now upon this and now upon that, according as lust leads them without discrimination; but had so bridled his affections that he desired nothing but what was equitable and right. For although he were tainted with some faults, according to human infirmity, and also fell twice shamefully, yet his continual government of the kingdom was such, that it might easily appear that the Holy Ghost bare chief sway in that. But as, by the Spirit of prophecy, the chief thing that he had an eye to was Christ, who reigns not for his own profit but for ours, and whose desire tends only to our welfare, we may gather hence a most profitable doctrine, that we need not in anywise fear that whenever we pray for the church, God will reject our prayers in which our heavenly king precedes us.

4 *For thou shalt prevent him.*] The changing of the tenses in the verbs does not interrupt the sense; and therefore I willingly translate this sentence in the future tense, as we know it to be an alteration much used among the Hebrews. Moreover, they that restrain this Psalm to the last victory that David gained over foreign nations, and suppose that the crown, whereof mention is made here, was the crown of the king of Ammon which the holy story celebrates; in my judgment lower too much what the Holy Ghost hath dictated of the uninterrupted felicity of his reign. And I doubt not but David comprehended his successors even unto Christ, and so commended the continual proceedings of God's grace in preserving that kingdom. For it was not said of any one man alone, *I will be his father, and he shall be my Son*, 2 Sam. vii. 14, but that saying ought to be extended from Solomon to Christ, as Isaiah witnesses excellently, ix. 6. affirming that it was then fulfilled, when the Son was given, or exhibited. Moreover, when he says *thou shalt prevent*, he means that God will be liberal and forward to bestow even of his own accord, so that he will not only grant when he is requested, but also anticipate the king's desire, in loading him with all kinds of good things unlooked for. By *blessings*, understand abundance and plenteousness. Whereas some translate the Hebrew word טוב, *goodness*, I

approve it not; for it is taken rather for the bountifulness, or for the free gifts and rewards of God; as if it had been said, the king should want nothing that might make his life blessed in all points, because God, of free will, shall meet him with manifold abundance of goods to enrich him withal. And he names the crown expressly, because it was the token of the kingdom; as if he had said that God would be the keeper of the king whom he himself had set up. Now whereas the prophet testifies that the crown, after it had been laid away a long time, should be set again upon Christ's head, we gather that by this Song the minds of the godly were raised up to the hope of an everlasting kingdom, whereof there was set forth but a shadow only, or dim image in the children of David. Wherefore in this place is affirmed the everlastingness of the kingdom of Christ, because he was not set upon the throne by the favour and suffrages of men, but God set the crown upon his head from heaven.

5 He asked thee life, and thou gavest him a long life for ever and ever.

6 Great is his glory through thy defence; brightness and beauty hast thou put upon him.

7 For thou hast set him to be blessings for ever; thou hast cheered him with gladness before thy countenance.

5 *He asked thee life.*] This verse confirms what I touched on recently; that this Psalm is not restricted to the person of any one man. For although David's life were prolonged, so that he passed not out of the world till he was spent with age and full of years, yet was his race much shorter than approached to this length of time, which is said to consist of many ages. Yea, if you account the time from the beginning of David's reign, to the captivity of Babylon, this duration will not be found in David's successors. Wherefore, there is no doubt David comprehends here an everlasting king. And here is a tacit comparison between the darksome and despicable beginning of his reign, or rather of his beginning, which was fraught with most grievous perils, and verging on despair; and the incredible glory that ensued afterwards, when God, exempting that kingdom from the common lot, placed it in a manner above the heavens. For assuredly it is no ordinary commendation to say, that that kingdom should continue steadfast as long as the sun and moon shall shine in the sky. David, therefore, in reporting that he asked life, covertly denotes into what

distress he had oftentimes been brought; so that the meaning is, Lord, since the time that thou hast called thy servant to the hope of the kingdom by holy anointing, his estate hath been such that he hath accounted it a singular benefit to escape out of the jaws of death. But now he hath not only come out safe through thy grace, but also thou hast promised continual succession to his posterity many ages after. And this not a little magnifies God's grace; that he vouchsafed such inestimable honour to a miserable and almost forlorn person, when he fearfully craved but respite from death, as that he should transmit the royal sceptre to his posterity many ages after. Some expound it, Thou hast given him the life that he asked, yea and so as to prolong his days for ever and evermore; but I think this frigid and constrained; for we must hold still the contrast between the weak and dishonourable beginning of the kingdom, and that unexpected honour wherewith God hath decked his servant, in calling the moon to witness that his seed should never fail. A similar example also was shewn in Christ, whom the Father hath raised up from contempt, slander, death, burial, and despair, unto the sovereignty of heaven, to sit at his right hand for evermore, and in the end to be the Judge of the world.

6 *Great is his glory.*] By these words the people signify that their king, because he is defended by the hand of God and delivered by his help, shall become more notable than if he had either reigned quietly with the consent of all men, or had been guarded by the power and puissance of men, or finally had stood unvanquished by his own power and policy; because it appeared the more clearly thereby, that he had not attained his princely dignity but by the direction and commandment of God. The faithful, therefore, leave it to worldly princes to ennoble themselves by their own doings, and to purchase praise by their own valour: for the godly set more store by the approbation of God than by all the triumphs in the world. Meanwhile, they promise themselves such help at God's hand as may suffice to deck the king with the highest glory.

7 *Thou hast set him to be blessings.*] Some expound it simply, that he was chosen to be king, on whom God had poured forth his graces abundantly. Nevertheless, it is certain that there is somewhat more expressed in this form of speech; namely, that there flowed such exuberance of good things upon the king, that he might worthily be a pattern of God's bounteousness; or also that in praying, his name might everywhere become famous as an example. For the Hebrews say that men are set to be a curse, when they are

made so detestable and are stricken with such horrible vengeance of God, that their name serves for cursing and banning. So, on the other hand, he is said to be set to be a blessing, under whose name we conceive wishes; as for example, if a man should say, God vouchsafe thee the same favour that he vouchsafed his servant David. Although I reject not this interpretation, yet am I content with the other; that the king, abounding in all kind of good things, should be a signal example of God's bounty. What follows on gladness, is to be marked carefully: for the meaning of the people is, not only that God will do the king good, because he will behold him with a favourable and fatherly eye; but also they assign the proper cause of the gladness to be this, that the king himself shall acknowledge God to be merciful towards him. For it were not enough for God to take care of us and to provide for us; unless, on the other hand, he gave us a taste of his goodness, irradiating us with his serene countenance, as we see in the fourth Psalm; *Many say, Who will shew us any good; Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us and we shall be saved.* And surely this is solid happiness; to feel God favourable to us, so that we dwell as it were under his eye.

8 Because the king trusteth in the Lord and in the goodness of the highest, he shall not stagger.

9 Thy hand shall find out all thine enemies, thy right hand shall find out thy haters.

10 Thou shalt put them as it were into a furnace of fire in the time of thy wrath, O Lord: in his anger shall he destroy them, and fire shall consume them.

11 Thou shalt destroy the fruit of them from off the earth, and the seed of them from among the children of men.

8 *Because the king trusteth.*] Here again the saints glory that their king shall be established, because he leans upon God; and they express the manner how he leans, that is, in hope, or trust. I read the whole verse as one sentence so that there is but one principal verb. That the king, because he is founded upon hope in God and his goodness, shall not be obnoxious to the overthrows which turn the kingdoms of the world upside down. Moreover, since it has been said before, that whatsoever things the faithful attribute to their king, pertain to the whole body of the church, there is offered us here a common promise which may keep us in a

tranquil station amid the various storms that agitate the world. For although the world be rolled as it were upon a wheel, whereby it comes to pass that those that were carried up to the highest top, suddenly fall down; yet the kingdom of Judah, and under the figure thereof the kingdom of Christ, is always excepted. But let us bear in mind, that they only rest on that firm foundation that cast themselves into God's lap by assured faith, and who, leaning upon his mercy, commit their welfare to him. For herewith is expressed the ground of hoping, namely, that God mercifully cherisheth his servants, whom he hath embraced of his free good will.

9 *Thy hand shall find.*] Hitherto has been described the internal happiness of the kingdom. Now, as need was, is added the invincible strength thereof against its enemies; for this imports as much as if the king should be proclaimed conqueror of all enemies. I said just now, that this member is not superfluous, because it were not enough for the kingdom to flourish internally, and to be replenished with peace, riches, and abundance of all good things, unless it were also well fortified against foreign violence. And this is applicable chiefly to Christ's kingdom, which is never without foes in the world; for although it be not always assailed by open force, but there is now and then some respite given, yet the devil's ministers never lay aside their malice and desire to do mischief, and therefore they never cease to seek the overthrow of Christ's kingdom. But it goes well with us, that our king, who sets his hand before us to defend us, is higher than all. Furthermore, because the word מצא signifies sometimes to suffice, and that here in the former member the letter ל is interposed, some interpreters take the word diversely by reason of the modes of construction; as if it had been said, Thy hand shall be able to resist all enemies, thy right hand shall find out all those that hate thee: so the sentence will ascend by degrees; Thy hand shall be able to withstand, yea thy right hand shall catch thine enemies, that they escape not destruction. Also there is added a dreadful kind of vengeance; whence we gather that he speaks not here of every manner of enemies, but of the wicked and frantic despisers of God, who rise up after the manner of giants against his only-begotten Son; for the very soreness of the punishment bewrays the heinousness of the mischief. Some think that David alludes to the kind of punishment which the sacred history reports him to have executed upon the Ammonites; but it is more probable that here is metaphorically set forth that dreadful destruction which awaits all the adversaries of Christ. For albeit

that they burn with rage against the church, and set the world on fire with their cruelty; yet when their wickedness shall have come to its full height, there is this reward laid up for them before God, that he will cast them into his furnace, and there burn them up. Now in the first member the king himself is called an avenger, and afterwards this office is transferred to the person of God; and at length the execution of the vengeance is committed to fire; which three things agree perfectly with each other. For we know that judgment is committed to Christ, to cast his foes headlong into everlasting fire; but it was expedient to be expressed in plain terms, that this judgment is not the judgment of man, but of God. No less profitable also was it for the extreme and terrible kind of vengeance to be set forth, that the lethargy of those who heedlessly despise God's threatenings might be aroused. Again; the same avails not a little to the comfort of the godly, for we know how dreadful the cruelty of the ungodly is, to which our faith would soon succumb, if it rose not up to God's judgment. The time of wrath admonishes us, that the cross is to be borne patiently as long as it shall please the Lord to exercise us and humble us. Then, if he put not forth his power at once to destroy the ungodly, let us learn to tarry the time which our heavenly father hath predetermined, and then will our king come forth armed with his terrible power to take vengeance. For now while he dissembles, he hath not forgotten either himself or us; but he smileth at the madness of those who gather presumptuousness from day to day, from going on with impunity. Now although this smiling of God brings no comfort to us, yet must we go through with our warfare till the day of vengeance come, which also shall be the year of our redemption, as Isaiah xxxiv. 8. says. However I am not dissatisfied with the supposition, that in the latter member is denounced against Christ's enemies, the destruction wherewith God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah in old time. For inasmuch as that punishment was a singular and notable example, above others, of God's judgment against all wicked persons; or rather a visible image upon earth, of eternal hell-fire that is prepared for the reprobate; this similitude is frequently met with in the scripture.

11 *The fruit of them from off the earth.*] By this circumstance David amplifies the greatness of God's wrath, because it shall extend even to their children. This is a doctrine common enough in the scripture, that God not only taketh vengeance of the first originators of mischief, but also casteth it into the bosom of their children. And yet, when he so pursueth his vengeance to the third and fourth generation, he

doth not rashly involve the guiltless with the offenders; but as the seed of the ungodly, whom he hath bereft of his grace, are accursed, and all the children of wrath are damned to utter destruction, his severity is no less just towards the children than towards the fathers. For who can arraign him, if he withdraw from the unworthy the grace wherewith he embraceth his servants. For in both ways he sheweth how dear and precious Christ's kingdom is to him; as well in lengthening out his mercy to the offspring of the faithful, even unto a thousand generations, as in that his wrath rests upon the reprobate, even to the third and fourth generation.

12 For they have spread out evil upon thee; they have imagined deceit against thee which they could not bring to pass.

13 Therefore shalt thou set them for a butt; in thy strings shalt thou prepare thyself against the face of them.

14 Be thou exalted in thine own strength O Lord; we will sing of thy power and praise it.

12. *For they have spread out.*] In this verse David declares that the ungodly had deserved such manner of punishment as he warned them of, because they have not only been troublesome to a mortal man, but also turned the fury of their insolence against God himself. For, as it was said in Psalm ii. no man could offer violence to that kingdom in the person of David which was consecrated by the commandment of God, but he also made foul and impious war against God. Much more then is God's majesty violated in attacking the kingdom of Christ, since it is not God's will to reign in the world, but by the hand of him. Now, then, forasmuch as the word נטה signifies sometimes to spread out, and sometimes to turn aside, it may not unfitly be translated either way; namely, that the ungodly, by spreading out their nets as it were, went about to subject God's power to them, or that they turned their malice aside, to thwart his power; as if a man should convey a brook into some place by cutting a ditch from it. He says afterwards that they imagined deceit, or a device that wanted success. By which words he censures the blind boldness of those who in fighting against God dare adventure any thing.

13 *Thou shalt set them for a butt.*] Because the word שכם, signifies properly a shoulder, some preserve that idea: as if he had said, their heads should be cast down

so that their shoulders should stick up in their stooping bodies; and so, according to them, the future subjection of the enemies is metaphorically denoted. Nevertheless, the other exposition is more received, even among the Hebrews, viz. that God will pen them up in some corner and there keep them from doing harm. For שכם is often taken for a part, or a coast, or a plot, or a place. But as, a little after, he sets forth God furnished with a bow, ready to shoot his arrows in the face of them; I doubt not that, continuing his metaphor, he compares them to a butt wherein a mark is wont to be set, and so the sense will flow meetly thus: Thou, Lord, wilt make them as it were a butt to shoot thine arrows at. Truly all his drift is, to instruct us to patience, until God in due season bring the ungodly to their end.

14 *Be thou exalted, O Lord.*] The Psalm is at length closed with a prayer, which again avouches that the kingdom, whereof mention is made, is so joined with God's glory, that his power is reflected in it. Now though God in old time exalted his own power in exalting David; yet, what is spoken here, is not completely fulfilled but in Christ, who is in such-wise set over us as our king by the heavenly Father, that he is also God, manifest in the flesh. Howbeit, as his divine power may well strike fear into the reprobate, so is it described as full of most sweet comfort to us, inspiring us with joy, with songs of praise, and with thanksgivings.

PSALM XXII.

David complains in this Psalm, that he is brought to such distress, that he is like a man in despair. Notwithstanding, after recounting the calamities which distressed him sorely, he rises again out of the bottomless pit of temptations, and gathers heart to hope well. But by the way, in his own person, he sets forth a figure of Christ, who he knew by the spirit of prophecy should be cast down in a marvellous and unwonted manner, before the Father should exalt him. And so the Psalm in two members unfolds that prophecy of Isaiah; He was taken up out of prison and judgment, and who shall declare his generation? Isaiah, liii. 8.

[*To the chief chanter, a Psalm of David, upon the hind of the morning.*]

Although this title be not clear, yet the interpreters have tortured themselves more than enough in explaining it, from their looking after I know not what sublime mystery in a trivial matter. Some will have the word אילת to mean the morning star, and others valour; but more properly it is

taken for a hind. Now, as the apostles are evident witnesses that it is a prophecy concerning Christ,the old writers have thought that Christ's dignity would not be invested with appropriate grandeur unless they applied the word hind in an allegorical sense to a sacrifice. The same was attempted by those who preferred the name of *Aurora*. But because I find no substance in these subtleties, it will be better to choose that which is more simple and natural. Certainly, to me it seems probable, that it was the beginning of some common ballad, for otherwise I see not how the title should agree with the contents. By the context it appears, that David comprehends here, not any one persecution, but all that he suffered under Saul. Whether he compiled this Psalm when he was in prosperity, is uncertain, except that we may assume that here are set forth the thoughts that occurred to him in his distresses, perplexities, and sorrowings.

2 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? far from my defence, and from the words of my roaring?

3 My God, I cry by day, and thou hearest not; and by night, neither hold I my peace.

2 *My God.*] The first verse contains two remarkable sentences; which, though they are contrary in appearance, yet daily creep into the minds of the godly together. Where he says he is forsaken and cast off by God, it seems to be the complaint of a man in despair. For what spark of faith is there remaining, where there is felt no help in God? and yet in that he calls twice upon his God, and deposits his groanings in his bosom, is no indistinct confession of faith. But the godly must needs be exercised with this inward conflict, as oft as God withdraws the tokens of his favour, that whithersoever they turn their eyes, they may meet with nothing but the darkness of night. And I maintain that this befalls the faithful, that by wrestling with themselves, they disclose the weakness of the flesh, as well as shew forth their faith. For as for the reprobates, because they give way to their own distrust, their sorrow overwhelms them, so that they aspire not to the favour of God by faith. Now, then, that David upheld himself, and was not swallowed up by temptation, it is easy to conclude by his words. For although he were greatly distressed with heaviness, yet he brake not out into this speech, *My God, my God,* but by resisting stoutly. The same thing does every godly man

feel daily in himself; namely, that after the judgment of the flesh, he thinks himself to be cast off and rejected of God, and yet by faith takes hold of the grace that is hidden; and so it comes to pass, that contrary affections are mingled and interwoven in their prayers. It cannot be but that the fleshly understanding must, by the view of things as they appear before it, conceive God to be either favourable or against it. Therefore when he suffers us to lie long in sorrow, and as it were to pine away, we must needs be affected, according to the flesh, as if he had quite forgotten us. When such a perplexity possesses the whole mind of a man, it drowns him in profound unbelief, so that he no more dares to hope for a remedy. But if, on the contrary part, faith succour him, the self-same man, that by the very thing itself deemed God to be sore displeased with him, or rather utterly estranged from him, espies his secret and far removed grace in the mirror of his promise. Between these two affections do men fluctuate, when Satan moves them to despair by casting the signs of God's wrath in their way, and essays to throw them down headlong. But faith, calling them back to the promises, teaches them to rest patiently, and to recline upon God, until he shew them his fatherly countenance again. Now we perceive out of what fountain issued, as well this exclamation, *My God, my God*, as also the complaint that is added immediately, *why hast thou forsaken me?* for when the vehemence of grief and the infirmity of the flesh had forced him to say, *I am forsaken of God;* lest he should be overwhelmed and faint, faith prompted him with a correction, and bade him boldly call him his God, of whom he thought himself to have been forsaken. Yea rather, we see that he gave the chief part to faith; for before he allows himself to utter his complaint, because he would be beforehand, he protests first that nevertheless he flees to his God. And surely, as the affections of the flesh are not easily restrained when they once boil out, but rather carry us beyond bounds, they must be bridled betimes, in their very beginning. Therefore did David keep an excellent order, in preventing his sorrow with faith, and in qualifying, by godly prayer, his complaint that followed concerning the greatness of his troubles. For if he had said without qualification, Lord, why forsakest thou me? he had seemed to murmur against God with bitter remonstrance; yea rather, there had been danger lest some violent exacerbation of grief, should have tainted his mind. But now by presenting to himself the barrier of faith, he holds in all his senses, that they should not bound away beyond due limit. Neither is the repetition superfluous, when he calls him

his God twice, and awhile after urges the same title again the third time. For as the conflict with this kind of temptation is arduous and painful, when God, as though he had cast off all regard of us, winketh at our miseries and groanings, therefore does David strain with the greater effort in seeking to strengthen himself. For it is not at the very first closing that faith gets victory. But when she has been exercised with many throes, at length she comes out triumphant. In the mean time, I say not that David was so stout and unyielding a champion, that his faith wavered not. For though the faithful endeavour never so earnestly to subdue the motions of their flesh, and devote themselves all wholly to God's service, yet do they always labour under some infirmity. Hence came that halting of holy Jacob, whereof mention is made by Moses, Gen. xxxii. 24; for though he got the upper hand in wrestling, yet he bare away the mark of his sinful defect. With such examples does God inspirit his servants to hold out, lest, under the sense of their own infirmity, their hearts should fail them. Wherefore we must go this way to work, as oft as our flesh rebels against us, and as it were with tempestuous violence hurries us into impatience; we must strive against it, to restrain its impetuosity. So will it come to pass, that we indeed shall be sore tossed, but still our faith shall always be saved from shipwreck. Nevertheless we gather by the very form of the complaint, that David did not reiterate the words in vain, wherewith to prop up his faith. For he does not simply say he was forsaken of God; but he adds, that he *was far off from his defence:* namely, because when he saw him in danger, he gave him no token of good hope. For inasmuch as the power of helping is in the hand of God, when he sees our safety exposed to the lust of our enemies, and yet sits still as though he regarded it not at all, who would not say that he draws back his hand lest he should deliver us? Moreover, by *the words of his roaring,* he intimates that he was racked with no light torments. Surely he was not so chicken-hearted as to utter horrid cries on account of some ordinary affliction. It must therefore needs be a great grief that forced roarings from a meek man, and such a one as was unflinching in undergoing troubles. Again; whereas Christ, hanging upon the cross, uttered the same speech even almost at the last gasp, Matt. xxvii. 46. we must consider how it may agree, that the only-begotten Son of God, should be stricken with such violent emotion of grief, as to cry out that he was forsaken of God the Father. This paradox has compelled many interpreters to catch at evasions. Therefore they have said that Christ made that

moan rather according to the opinion of the common people than because he felt so in himself; but in this they saw not that they abate much from the benefit of redemption, while they feign that Christ was exempted from the terrors which the judgment of God striketh into sinners. Truly it was but a fond fear, that they scrupled to make Christ subject to so great sorrow lest they should diminish his glory; for seeing that Peter, Acts ii. 24. witnesses plainly, that it was impossible for him to be held by the sorrows of death, it follows, that he was not privileged and utterly free from them. And surely, inasmuch as he had taken upon him our form, and the imputation of our sins, it was necessary that he should appear as a sinner at the judgment-seat of God. Hence came that dismay and dread which compelled him to deprecate death; not because it would have been so bitter for him to have passed out of this life; but because there was before his eyes, the curse which lay heavily upon sinners. Now if drops of blood were forced from him in his first conflict, so that he needed an angel to comfort him, Luke xxii. 43, it is no marvel if he uttered such great sorrow in this last agony. It may, by the way, be noted, that Christ so suffered the affections of man, as that he fell not through weakness of the flesh, because the perfection of his nature kept him pure from all excess. Therefore the temptations wherewith Satan assailed him, he was able to overcome without any wound that might leave behind it a mark of halting. And it is indubitable that Christ by that outcry shewed openly, that this Psalm was made on him by the spirit of prophecy, although David bewail his own miseries therein.

3 *My God, I cry.*] In this verse he expresses the long continuance of his trouble, which increased his disquietness and weariness. Besides this, it was a sorer temptation, that he seemed to lose his labour in crying; for since the only remedy of our evils is to call upon God, if our praying profit us not, what help is there then? Therefore he complains that God is after a sort deaf to his requests. When he says, in the second part, that he has no rest, the meaning is, that he feels no comfort that may quiet his mind; for as long as affliction pinched him, the unquietness of his mind forced him to cry out. And here is clearly seen the constancy of faith, which was not discouraged with the long continuance of adversities; for the rule of praying aright is, that he who has seemed to beat the air a long while in vain, should not therefore leave off. Meanwhile, this is granted to the faithful by the fatherly lovingkindness of

God, that if they are disappointed of their desire for a time, they may disburden their griefs into his bosom.

4 But thou art holy, and inhabitest the praises of Israel.

5 Our fathers trusted in thee; they trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them.

6 They cried unto thee, and were saved; they trusted in thee, and were not put to shame.

7 But I am a worm, and not a man: the scorn of men, and the contempt of the people.

8 All that see me, scoff at me; they make a move with their lips, and wag with their head.

9 He fell down unto the Lord: let him rid him, let him deliver him, seeing he loveth him.

4 *But thou art holy.*] The copula which is read in the Hebrew must doubtless be resolved into the adversative particle. Some think the eternal and immutable state of God is set against the miseries which David felt; to which I subscribe not, because I meet with a more simple and more genuine sense; namely, that God hath always shewn himself favourable to his elect people. For here it is not considered what kind of person he is in heaven, but what kind of person he hath shewn himself towards men. And it is demanded whether David, in these words, heightens his own complaint, that he alone obtains nothing at God's hand; or whether, by casting a shield as it were before him, he repel the temptation, while he sets God before him as his continual deliverer. Although I may grant that it makes to the augmentation of his grief, yet I doubt not that David seeks from it a remedy against distrust. For as it was a dangerous temptation to see himself forsaken of God, lest he might nourish it with continual thinking upon it, he turned his mind aside to the continual examples of God's grace, whence he might conceive some nourishment of good hope. Therefore his meaning was, not only to seek how it should come to pass, that God, who had always dealt mercifully with his people, should now, forgetting as it were his own nature, leave a miserable man destitute of all help and comfort, but also to take up a buckler wherewith to shield himself against the fiery darts of Satan. He calls God holy, because he continueth always like himself; and he says that he inhabiteth the praises of Israel, because, in

being beneficial to his elect people, he ministereth matter of thanks by the continual holding on of his grace. For unless God give a taste of his goodness, we must needs be dumb. And as David is one of the members, he strives against impediments, to the intent he may hope to be received at length into the fellowship of the body, to sing the praises of God.

5 *In thee.*] It is a rendering of the cause why God sitteth among the praises of the people; namely, because he hath his hand always stretched out to preserve the faithful; for David, as I said just now, gathers together the examples of all ages, wherewith to raise up and strengthen himself, and to persuade himself assuredly, that as God never shook off any of his chosen people, he also shall be one of the number of them whose welfare is laid up in the hand of God; and therefore he says, in express words, that he is come of the posterity of those that had been heard, meaning thereby, that he is an heir of the same grace which they had felt; for he has an eye to the covenant wherein God adopted the offspring of Abraham to himself. For it were to small purpose to remember the proofs of the mercy which God hath shewn to his servants, unless each of us unite himself to the same order, like as David includes himself in the church of God. In repeating thrice, that the fathers obtained deliverance by hoping, it is not to be doubted, that he modestly intimates that he has a common hope with them; whereby it comes to pass that the effect of the promises extends unto us. For that a man may apply to his own behoof the benefits that God bestowed upon his servants in old time, he should set his eyes upon the free promises, and upon faith, that leans upon the same. Moreover, that he might shew that this faith was not cold or dead, he says, at the same time, that he *cried out.* For he shamefully belies himself, who says he trusts in God, and yet is so benumbed in his adversities that he calls not upon him for help. Therefore the trueness of faith is known by prayer, like as the goodness of a tree is known by its fruit. It is by the way to be noted, that no other prayers are accounted proper before God, but such as issue out of faith, and are joined with it; for it was not without good reason that David placed *crying out*, in the midst between the words of hoping.

7 *But I am a worm.*] He murmurs not against God as though he were hardly dealt with; but in bewailing his case, that he may the more provoke God to mercy, he says he is not reputed so much as a man. This, at the first blush, seems to tend to discouragement, or rather to the

abolition of faith. But by the sequel it will appear on the contrary, to declare how miserable his state is, that he may thereby conceive hope of releif. Therefore he reasons from the impossibility, that it cannot be but God must at length stretch out his hand to him, being sore afflicted, and at the last cast; for if to all such as have at any time been but moderately afflicted he have shewn compassion, how should he forsake his servant, when plunged in the lowest abyss of distress. In this wise, whenever we are overwhelmed with the excessive weight of affliction, we must rather fetch from thence matter whereupon to ground hope of deliverance, than yield ourselves to despair. Now, if God have exercised this his most eminent servant so severely, and so far abased him that he had no room even among the most despised of men, let not us think it hard to be brought low after his example. Although we ought chiefly to call to mind the Son of God, in whom also we see this fulfilled, according as it was witnessed by the prophecy of Isaiah: *He was despised, neither made we any account of him: he was a man of sorrows; there was no favour nor beauty in him, so that every man hid his face from him;* Is. liii. 3. By which words are sufficiently disproved the frivolous cavillings of those who have played the philosophers about the term *worm*, as though David should note some singular mystery in the generation of Christ, and not rather say that he was abased beneath all men, and after a sort cut off from the number of living beings. Now that the Son of God suffered himself to be brought to this point, yea and descended even to hell, do so little darken his glory, that it is rather a bright mirror of his incomparable grace towards us.

8 *All that see me.*] It is an exposition of the last sentence. He had said that he was a scorn to the lowest of men, and as it were to the offscourings of the people. Now he recites with what reproach he had been commonly assailed; namely, that not being content with scornful words, they uttered their insolence in gesture, both by pouting with their lips, and by shaking their heads. For the exposition of those who say that *to open in the lip*, means *to rail*, appears to me inapplicable; for the letter ב is superfluous, as happens often among the Hebrews. Therefore I preferred to translate it, *they thrust out their lip*, because it is the gesture of such as in scorn mock men openly. But what followed was much more heinous, when they cast him in the teeth that God, who he professed was his father, was turned from him. For we know that when David saw himself wrongfully condemned in the world, it was always his wont to resort to this point, that being assured of a good

conscience in himself, he had God as his avenger in heaven. Now, all men cast in his teeth, that with vain arrogance he had made an empty boast of aid from God. Where is that God, say they, on whom he leaned? where is that love to which he trusted? There is no weapon of Satan's more deadly to wound men's souls, than when he attempts to deprive us of our hope, by turning God's promises into a mockery. Howbeit, they say not simply that David's prayers were to no purpose, and the love of God, which he boasted of, fallacious; but they gird at him indirectly, as a hypocrite that falsely pretended the name of God from whom he was estranged. How sharp a temptation this was, every man may consider by his own feelings. But the remedy he used proved the sincere fervour of his confidence. For unless he had been sure that God was his witness, he never durst have put up this complaint to him. Wherefore, as often as men charge us with hypocrisy, we must by all means endeavour that the inward soundness of our heart may answer for us before God. And as often as Satan attempts to dislodge faith by biting scoffs, let this be our holy anchor, to call God to witness, that he may avouch his own righteousness in defending us, since there can be no fouler blasphemy offered to his name, than to say that they who repose their trust in him are puffed up with vain confidence; and that they who have fully persuaded themselves that they are dear to God, deceive themselves with a vain opinion. Now seeing that the Son of God was assailed with the same weapon, Satan will not a whit the more spare the faithful who are his members. Wherefore it behoves them to be armed with this shield, that although they be utterly forlorn among men, yet if they cast their care upon God, their prayers shall not be in vain. By the word גל is very well expressed the nature and force of faith, which, leaning upon God's providence, discharges our minds of the burdens of cares and troubles.

10 Surely, thou art the leader of me out of my mother's womb; the founder of my trust upon my mother's breasts.

11 Upon thee was I cast out of the matrix; thou art my God from my mother's womb.

12 Go not far from me, for tribulation is near at hand, because there is none to help me.

10 *Surely, thou.*] Again David raises a new bulwark, wherewith to withstand and repulse the practices of Satan.

For he gathers together God's benefits, by which he had learned long since that he was his father; yea, even before he was born, he says that God had shewn him such a proof of his fatherly love, that he might well hope for life at his hand, though he were overwhelmed with the mist of death. For the Holy Ghost dictates this wisdom to the faithful, that in cases of fear they gather testimonies of God's goodness, which may avail to support their faith. For this must be taken for a principle, that as God's bounteousness is never overlaid, and that no profusion is able to consume his riches; as we have found him our father from our first infancy, so will he also continue the same towards us even unto extreme old age. In that he acknowledges himself to have been taken out of his mother's womb by the hand of God, and that there was cause of trust given him *upon his mother's breasts;* the meaning is, that infants are born into the world, and fed with their mother's milk, after so natural a fashion, that the wonderful providence of God shineth forth therein. Indeed this miracle becomes slighted by reason of continual custom. But if ingratitude did not seal up our eyes in insensibility, there is not a childbirth in the world but would ravish us with admiration. For what prevents the child conceived from being consumed a hundred times in its own uncleanness before the full time of birth arrive, but that God, by his secret and incomprehensible power, keepeth it alive in its grave. And after it is born into the world, considering that it is subject to so many miseries, and is not able to stir a finger to help itself, how should it live one day, except God took it up and cherished it in his fatherly bosom? Worthily, therefore, is the infant said to be cast upon him, because, unless he fed the tender babes, and watched over all the offices of the nurse, a hundred ways of death wait for them, even in the instant of their birth, by which they would be instantly suffocated. In the end, David concludes that he was his God; for although the like grace, to all seeming, be shewn also to brute beasts, yet he sheweth himself a father peculiarly to mankind only. Now although God endue not babes forthwith with knowledge of him, yet is he said to give them confidence, because in shewing by the very deed that he hath regard of their life, he after a sort calleth them back to him, as in another place he is said to feed the ravens' young that call upon him, Ps. cxlvii. 9. And since God so preventeth the things that are void of reason, surely he will in nowise disappoint the hope of his servants, when he is besought and entreated. By which argument David also strove to overcome temptation.

12 *Go not far.*] He challenges God's mercy by another means; namely, because he is urged with sore distress. And I doubt not he set before his eyes how the scripture everywhere attributes to God the office of succouring such as be in misery, and being, the more ready to help, the more pressing our distress. The very being past hope, therefore, was as good as a ladder to him, to lift up his mind to the desire of praying. So also should the feeling of adversity gather us under the wings of God, that by his present help, he may shew himself careful of our welfare.

13 Strong bulls did beset me, bulls of Bashan besieged me.

14 They opened their mouth upon me, as a ramping and roaring lion.

15 I was poured out like water, and all my bones were loosened: my heart became like wax, it melted in the midst of my bowels.

16 My strength was dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my gums, and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

17 For dogs have hemmed me in round about, the companies of the wicked have beset me: they have bored my hands and my feet.

13 *Strong bulls.*] Now he complains of the fierceness and cruel rage of his enemies: and he compares them first to bulls, secondly to lions, and thirdly to dogs. When the anger of bulls is kindled, we know with what terrible violence they are carried along. A lion also is a cruel beast, and dreadful to mankind. And what eager and fierce boldness to do hurt there is in dogs, when they fly upon a man in anger, is known. The conclusion is, that David's enemies were so bloodthirsty and cruel that they were more like wild beasts than men. And he calls them not simply *bulls*, but strong bulls. Some translate the word רבים, many, but I like it not: true it is that David was assailed with enormous forces, but it appears by the second member, that here is treated of the strength of them, and not their number. For he terms them *bulls of Bashan*, as well-fed bulls, and therefore large and strong; for we know that the hill of Bashan was noted for rich and fat pastures.

15 *I was poured out.*] Hitherto, he said he was so beset by wild beasts that he was not far from death, as though he had been at the point of being devoured every moment.

And now he bewails his inward grief also: whence we gather that he was not amazed in dangers; for it must not have been any ordinary fear which could have made him in a manner to pine away, made his bones loose and his heart melt away. We see, then, that David was not buffeted with waves like an insensible rock, but was stricken through and through with sore troubles, to withstand which, he had been too weak, according to the infirmity of the flesh, if he had not been helped by the power of the Spirit. How these sufferings may agree with Christ, I have told you a little before; for in respect that he was very man, he was verily subject to the infirmities of our flesh, but without taint. For the perfect pureness of nature that was in him, does not extinguish human affections, but only rules them that they become not sinful by excess. The greatness of grief, therefore, might not so weaken him, but that he could, nevertheless, with a settled mind submit himself to God even in the midst of any torments. Although the same be not granted to us, who both suffer troublesome affections, and never keep them so in awe but that with their unruliness they drive us hither and thither, yet must we pluck up our hearts after the example of David, and when we are wellnigh at the last cast through infirmity, we must make our moan to God that he may restore us again.

16 *My strength is dried.*] He means the vigour which the moisture that supplies our root ministers to us. To the same purpose also tends what he adds *that his tongue cleaveth to his gums.* For we know that through excessive mourning, not only the powers of life are withered, but almost all moisture is dried up. Afterwards he says he was laid out to be buried; meaning thereby that all hope of life was departed. In which sense Paul also says, 2 Cor. i. 9, that he had received the judgment of death, and David spoke of himself hyperbolically, to draw us further. For the dreadful encounter of Christ with death, in which he was forced to sweat blood; his going down to hell, whereby he tasted of the wrath of God, that was due to sinners, and, in short, the very emptying of himself, could not be adequately expressed by any ordinary forms of speech. Moreover David speaks of death after the manner of men that are sore troubled; who, being amazed with fear, conceive of nought but dust and destruction. Now as often as this mist dims the minds of the saints, there is always some misbelief mixed with it, which suffers them not to emerge at once to the light of new life. But in Christ these two things were joined wonderfully; that is to say, terror obtruding itself through the curse of God, and patience quieting all emotions by faith, so they

rested under the government of God. As for us that are not endued with like power; if at any time, beholding nothing but destruction, we lie amazed for a season, yet it behoves us by little and little to climb up towards that hope which quickens the dead.

17 *They bored my hands.*] Word for word it is *like a lion, my hands.* And forasmuch as all the Hebrew books at this day agree in the same reading, I should have scrupled to step aside from so great a consent, but that the reason of the sentence compelled me so to do, and that there were good grounds to conjecture that the place is corrupted fraudulently by the Jews. No doubt the Greek interpreters read the letter ו, whereas the letter י is written now: for when the Jews prate that the literal sense was inverted on purpose, it is void of all colour of truth. For what need was there to trifle so presumptuously where the subject did not require it? But no light suspicion of falsehood attaches to them, whose only desire is to spoil the crucified Jesus of his distinctions, lest he might appear to be the Messiah and the Redeemer. If we receive that which they would have us to receive, the sense will be crabbed and very obscure. First it will be a defective expression, for the supplying whereof, they say, the word *beset* must be repeated. But what mean they by *besetting* the hands and the feet? for besetting belongs no more to these parts, than to the whole man. Being detected here, they flee to doting tales after their wonted manner, and say, that the lion, when he meets any man, makes a circle with his tail before he falls upon his prey; whence it is evident enough that they are at a loss. Again; seeing he had used the similitude of a lion a verse or two before, it had been to no purpose to repeat it. I omit how certain of our men observe, that a word joined with a note of similitude, is commonly otherwise pointed. However, I labour not to vanquish the Jews, whose stubbornness in wrangling is indomitable, but only I meant to shew briefly how wickedly they worry the Christians through the diverse reading of this place. For when they object that by appointment of the law there was no man fastened with nails, therein they betray their gross ignorance of history: for it is certain that the Romans conveyed many of the customs of their country into their provinces. If they object that David was never nailed to a cross, the solution is easy; he complained metaphorically, that he was no less distressed by his enemies than he that hath his hands and feet bored through, and is nailed to a piece of timber: of which sort of metaphors we shall meet with more a little after.

18 I will number all my bones; they stare and gaze upon me.

19 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my coat.

20 And thou, Lord, be not far off; O my strength make haste to help me.

21 Deliver my soul from the sword, my only one from the hand of the dog.

22 Save me out of the lion's mouth, and hear me from the horns of the unicorns.

18 *I will number.*] The Hebrews call bones עצמות, from strength; and therefore this name is sometimes applied either to friends, by whose defence we are strong, or to arguments and reasons in defence, which are the strength of the case. Some, therefore, expound this place in this wise; I shall avail nothing by numbering my reasons, because mine enemies are, once for all, fully determined to destroy me by right or wrong, without respect of equity. And others expound it thus; If I gather whatsoever helps may seem to make to my furtherance, yet shall they nothing profit me. But because the exposition which is more usually received, seems more simple and genuine, I embrace it the more willingly; namely, that David complains that the bones appeared in his body which was withered with leanness. For soon after he adds, that his enemies take pleasure in such a sight. And the context runs on smoothly, that the cruelty of his enemies is so insatiable, that beholding a miserable soul pining with grief, and as it were withered away, it was meat and drink to them to see so sorrowful a sight. That which follows in the next verse concerning his garments, is metaphorical. For it is as if he had said that all his goods had been despoiled, as conquerors are wont either to rifle their prey, or, else to cast lots what each man shall have to his share. For in comparing his ornaments, riches, and whatsoever he possesses, to his raiment; he complains that after he was spoiled of them, they were divided with shame among his enemies, as if it had been a reward of victory; whereby is augmented the shamefulness of their dealing, in that they triumphed over him none otherwise than if he had been a dead man. Now the evangelists cite this place literally, as they term it, and without a figure, and in so doing there is no absurdity. For that we might know the more certainly that, in this Psalm, Christ is described to us by the spirit of prophecy, it was the will

of the heavenly Father that, in the person of his Son, there should appear a visible accomplishment of the things that were shadowed in David. Matthew, reporting in his eighth chapter and sixteenth verse, that the paralytic, the blind, and the lame, were healed of their diseases, says that by that means was fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, that Christ was sent to take away our infirmities; whereas, the prophet in that place sets forth to us the Son of God as a ghostly physician. But slow and hard are we to believe, and therefore no marvel, if for our grossness there were given to us such a demonstration as might be felt, that it might be able to awaken us from our lethargy.

20 *And thou, Lord.*] Whatsoever David has hitherto set forth of himself, must be kept in mind. For as there wanted nothing to complete his miseries, and yet in the meanwhile there glistened not one spark of deliverance to come, it is a wonderful trial of faith, that he not only endured patiently, but arose out of the bottomless pit of despair, to call upon God. We may note therefore that David poured not out his moanings as vain and profitless, as sorrowful persons oftentimes fling forth their sighs at random; for the prayers added, well declare that he hoped for the issue which he looked for. Yea rather, when he terms God *his strength*, in this proper ascription he yields a more evident witness of his trust. For he conceives not his petitions doubtingly; but he warrants himself the help which as yet he sees not. *By the sword, by the hand of the dog, by the mouth of the lion, and by the horns of the unicorns*, are understood present peril of death, and that many and sundry ways. Whence we gather, that when he was so beset by death that he utterly fainted in himself, yet he stood strong in the Lord, and the spirit of life bare sway always in his heart. Some take the only soul for dear and precious, but I approve not of it; because it rather signifies that among so many deaths there was no help offered him in all the world; as in Psalm xxxv. 17, in the same sense, *the only soul* is put for *a desolate* or *solitary soul*, and such a one as is destitute of all succour; which will appear more plainly by Psalm xxv. 16, where David, calling himself poor and alone, doubtless complains that he is bereft of all friends, and forsaken of the whole world. In the end of the 22nd verse, where it is said, *Answer me*, or *hear me, from the horns*, though the Hebrew phrase be somewhat obscure to Latin ears, yet is not the sense doubtful, since the cause is only put for the effect: for deliverance comes of God's hearing us. If any ask how this may be applied to Christ, whom the Father delivered

not from death; I answer at a word, that he was more mightily delivered than if the danger had been prevented; even so much as it is more to rise from death than to be healed of a sore sickness. Wherefore, death prevented not Christ's rising again from bearing witness at length that he was heard.

23 I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

24 Ye that fear the Lord praise him, all ye the seed of Jacob glorify him, and be afraid of him ye seed of Israel.

25 For he hath not despised nor disdained the poor, nor hidden his face from him; and when he called unto him he heard him.

23 *I will declare thy name.*] David, in promising that he will not be thankless when he is delivered, confirms what I have said heretofore, that he was never so cast down with temptation, but he took heart to resist. For how could he address himself to the sacrifice of thanksgiving, but upon confidence of deliverance conceived before; for what if we grant that the Psalm was composed after David had obtained, in very deed, the thing he would have; yet is it not to be doubted, but he put the self-same things into verse afterwards, which he had at that time conceived in his mind. And it is to be marked that he promises no common token of thankfulness, but such as God required for rare benefits; namely, that the faithful should come into his sanctuary, and there with solemn ceremony make known to the world the grace which they had had experience of. For to this purpose serves open thanksgiving; namely, that the faithful should by all means exercise themselves in the service of God, and encourage one another to do the same. For we know that God's incredible might in saving David shone forth, yea and that in more kind of miracles than one. Wherefore, it is no marvel though he bind himself with a solemn vow to make open profession of his thankfulness. By his *brethren* he denotes the Israelites; not only because they issued from the same stock, but rather, because the common religion, as it were some holy bond, held them bound one to another by spiritual relationship. The apostle, Heb. ii. 12, applying this verse to Christ, gathers from it that he was partaker of one nature with us, and joined to us by true fellowship of the flesh, acknowledging us for his brethren, and vouchsafing that honourable name to us. I have told you already, which

will be also easily seen from the end of this Psalm, that Christ was here shadowed out unto us under the figure of David. Aptly, therefore, does the apostle note that under this name is established our right of brotherly alliance with Christ. Now, although this agrees sometimes with all mankind, yet the true enjoying thereof remains only among the faithful. In which consideration, Christ also by his own mouth restraineth this title to his disciples: *Go and tell my brethren, and Peter, I ascend to my Father and your Father.* John, xx. 17. For as for that alliance of the flesh, whereby he hath made us his fellows, the ungodly break it off by the separation of their unbelief, so that they become utter strangers again through their own fault. For like as David, having comprehended all Abraham's offspring in that word, soon after directs his remarks especially to the true worshippers of God; so Christ, who by breaking down the wall had communicated the adoption to all nations, and by that means offered himself to be their brother, retaineth none in the degree of brotherhood but the faithful.

24 *Ye that fear the Lord.*] Here again is expressed more distinctly the fruit of open thanksgiving which I spoke of; namely, the allurement whereby each man, as much as in him lies, stirs up the church by his example to praise God; for he declares that the end for which he will magnify the name of God in the congregation, is to exhort his brethren to do the like. But as hypocrites commonly crowd themselves into the church, and the chaff is mingled with the wheat in the floor of the Lord, he speaks to the godly, and to those that fear God. And surely, although impure men thunder out God's praises with distended throat, yet do they but dishonour his holy name. Indeed it were to be wished that all estates of the world sang together. But as the first part of harmony flows out of the sincere affection of the heart, no man can be a meet setter forth of God's glory, but he that serves him reverently. Afterwards he names the seed of Jacob and Israel, as having an eye to the common calling of the people. And truly there was no hindrance in him, but that all the children of Abraham might have praised God with one mouth. But as he saw many of the Israelites degenerated, he puts a difference between them and the true Israelites; and at the same time shews that God's name is not magnified aright, but where inward godliness flourishes; and therefore, in his exhortation, he joins reverence again to the praises of God. Stand in fear of him, says he, for it is but a jest whatsoever the hypocrites make a shew of in this behalf. Again; he commends fear, not such as may scare away the faithful from

coming unto God, but which, having rightly humbled them, may bring them into his sanctuary, according as it is said in the fifth Psalm. Now if a man marvel to see David exhort those to the praising of God whom he had commended lately for so doing, the answer is ready; that even the holiest of all were never yet so imbued with the fear of God, but that they had need of continual incitements. Therefore it is by no means superfluous, that he bids such as fear God to stand in awe of him, and to cast themselves humbly down before him.

25 *For he hath not despised.*] Such mutual communion ought to flourish among the faithful, that one may rejoice with another, and give thanks in common for each man's welfare; according also, as Paul teaches, 2 Cor. i. 11, *That for the gift bestowed on us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf.* Nevertheless, this confession of David's had respect to another end also; namely, that every man severally should hope for like mercy at God's hand towards himself. By the way, we are taught in these words that afflictions are to be borne patiently, how long soever it shall please the Lord to bring men into poverty, because he will succour them at length.

26 Of thee shall be my praise in the great congregation; I will pay my vows in the sight of them that fear him.

27 The poor shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the Lord that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.

28 All the ends of the world shall remember themselves and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the heathen shall fall down before him.

29 For the kingdom is the Lord's; and he shall rule among the heathen.

30 All the fat ones of the earth shall eat and worship: all that go down into the dust shall bow themselves before his face, and he that quickeneth not his own soul.

26 *Of thee shall be my praise.*] Although I reject not the other translation, yet the Hebrew manner of speaking seems to me to require this sense, that David takes his matter for praise from God; and therefore I understand the word, *shall come* or *shall flow*, so that he should mean, My praise shall come or flow from thee: which I take to be spoken

so, that David should testify that he imputes his welfare only and wholly to God. For we know there are many that, under pretence of praising God, trumpet forth the commendations of themselves and their friends, and setting God aside, get occasion to sing their own triumphs. Moreover, he repeats the same thing that he had touched on lately; namely, that he will shew tokens of his thankfulness openly, thereby to edify others, and that not without the solemn exercise of godliness which the law commanded. For in cases of great importance, and when any danger was at hand, they were wont to vow a peace-offering, which they performed after they had obtained their desire. David therefore, as he was one of the number of the saints, framed himself to the common order of the church, as it became him. These are the vows which he gives us to understand he had vowed in his extreme distress, and to the performance whereof he addresses himself with a noble and cheerful courage, and full of confidence. Now although it behoved him to perform this ceremony before all men without exception, yet he confesses again that his desire is, that as many as should be present to bear witness, might be pure worshippers of God. So, although it be not in our power to cleanse the church of God, yet is it our duty to wish cleanness. But the papists, wresting this place to their counterfeit vows, are too stupid and ridiculous to need long disproof. For what likeness is there in their babyish fooleries, wherewith they attempt to please God after their own imagination, to this holy testimony of thankfulness, which not only the feeling of godliness put into the hearts of the fathers, but also God himself hath commanded and ratified in his law? yea, rather with what countenance dare they match their foolish and stinking superstitions with this sacrifice, most precious of all others; namely, the sacrifice of thanksgiving? according as the scripture witnesses that the chief part of the service of God consists in this, that the faithful should openly shew that they acknowledge God to be the author of all good things.

27 *The poor shall eat.*] He has an eye to the custom received in those days, for they were wont to feast at their sacrifices, as it is known well enough. And he promises such a feast as he may exercise and try his faith in. And surely that is the acceptable and sweet sacrifice unto God, whereunto is annexed compassion and mercy. Otherwise the ceremonies wherewith men profess to worship God, with all their glittering and pomp, vanish into smoke. Although I confess he promises not simply that he will make a dole to the poor and hungry, wherewith to feed them; but

he says they shall be partakers of his feast for another cause; that is, that an occasion of comfort being ministered to them, cheerfulness may flourish again in their minds. For they behold, as it were in a glass, the goodness of God set forth to all miserable persons, which with incredible comfort might assuage the grief for all evils. Therefore he adds, *they shall praise the Lord that seek him.* For though their very fulness ought to incite them to yield thanks to God, yet no doubt the end of the sacrifice is noted, which appears yet more clearly by the close of the verse. For one meal's meat could not have sufficed to quicken their hearts for ever; but it was the hope conceived of their ready help with God, which did it, because all the faithful justly drew the deliverance of that one man to the comfort of themselves. Whence it follows, that the praises of God were so set forth in the peace-offerings, as that they exercised their faith in them also. Howbeit, as it is enough with hypocrites to perform the lifeless ceremony, he restrains this rightful use to the true and holy Israelites; for the assured mark of godliness, is to seek God. Now if the fathers under the law were refreshed unto spiritual life by their holy feasts, much more plentifully will this virtue exert itself at this day in the holy supper of Christ, if so be that they seek the Lord truly, and with all their heart, who come to take part of it.

28 *Shall remember themselves.*] This place, without controversy, shews that David stops not in his own person, but describes the promised Christ under a figure. For even then it ought to have been a known principle, that he was created king by the appointment of God, that the people might grow together into a blessed life under one head, which was at length completely fulfilled in Christ. I confess, indeed, that David's name was great and renowned among the nations that bordered upon him: but how small a parcel of the world was that? Besides, the foreign nations, upon whom he had laid the yoke of his kingdom, he never brought to the pure worshipping of God. Therefore, that constrained bondage which made the heathen nations subject to an earthly king, was far wide of the willing obedience of godliness, which should gather them from their straying, unto God. Now in that he says they shall return unto God when they have been well acquainted with his grace, there is noted more than a common change. Moreover, by alluring them to the fellowship of the holy feast, he grafts them apparently into the body of the church. Some draw the word *remember* to the renewing of the light of faith among the Gentiles, as though they should then

have called again to mind the remembrance of God, which they had erewhile forgotten for a time; but it seems too subtle and far-fetched. The conversion or return whereof mention is made, signifies, I confess, that they were estranged from God by wicked falling away before; but the remembering or bethinking of themselves means nothing but that the Gentiles, awakened by the wonderful miracles of God, should come again to the pure religion from which they were slipt away. And it is to be noted, that the worshipping of God is derived from the knowing of him; for he says, that such shall come in humble wise to honour him as have profited so far forth in meditating on God's works, that they wanton not any more against him with proud contempt; which sense, the reason that is soon after added, confirms more pointedly; namely, that *the kingdom is the Lord's, to reign over the heathen.* For whereas some interpret it thus; That it is no marvel though the Gentiles be compelled to yield honour to God by whom they were created, and by whose hand they are ruled, although he have made no covenant of life with them; I reject it as devoid of force. For there is no doubt but this place agrees with many other prophecies, by which God's throne is erected for Christ to sit in to govern the whole world. Therefore, although God's providence display itself without exception to the whole world, yet must we know that he then bears rule in very deed, when having dispelled the darkness, and shed forth the light of his word, he sheweth himself openly. Such a description of his kingdom is there in Is. ii. 4. *He shall judge the nations, and reprove the heathen.* Furthermore, as God has not subdued the whole world to himself, before they that erst were untameable, suffer themselves to be reformed by the preaching of the Gospel, we may gather that this conversion was not made under the leading and government of Christ. If any man object, that the whole world was never yet converted, the solution is easy, that the time wherein God was suddenly made known everywhere by the Gospel is compared with that old state, when he held the knowledge of himself inclosed within the bounds of Judah. For we know that Christ pierced swiftly from the east into the west, like a flash of lightning, to fetch the Gentiles on all sides into the church.

30 *All the fat ones.*] Lest any man should think it an absurdity that now the fat ones of the earth are admitted guests to the feast, which he seemed just now to have appointed only to the poor; let us be assured that the first place was therefore given to the poor, because that to them chiefly was the comfort set forth, in the example of David.

Nevertheless, it was requisite, that in the second place should be set the rich and fortunate, lest they might think themselves excluded from the participation of the same grace. For although the pressure of present adversities force them not to seek comfort of grief; yet have they need of remedy, that they should not make themselves drunken with delights, but rather lay up their joy in heaven. Again; as they are subject to many sorrows, their wealth will be a curse to them, if it hold down their minds to the ground. The sum is, that this sacrifice shall be common as well to the lusty and fat, as to the lean and half-starved; that the former laying aside their pride, may humble themselves before God, and the other, though they be brought never so low, may lift up their minds with spiritual joy, to God the author of all good things; according as James, i. 10, admonishes both parties; *Let the brother that is great and rich glory in his lowliness; and let the despised and mean man rejoice in that he is exalted.* Now, if God have so matched the full with the hungry, the glorious with the mean, and the happy with the wretched, under the law; much more reason is there why he should do so at this day under the Gospel. Therefore, when rich men hear that food is offered them elsewhere than in earthly abundance; let them learn to taste so soberly the things that God hath granted them to use for a time, as that the spiritual meats become not unsavoury to them, or that they be not loathsome to them from fastidiousness. For as long as they shall remain sunk in their own dregs, they will never have godly appetite to the other, or take any pleasure in the taste of them. But as it behoves the fat ones to be made lean, that they may offer themselves to God's feeding; so David heartens the famished, with assured and dauntless confidence, that their neediness may not hinder them from access, but rather, he bids even the dead to the feast, so that even they that are most despised, and in a manner stink before the face of the world, may nevertheless be bold to press forward to the holy table of God. The alteration of the number in the end of the verse, somewhat obscures the sense; still it is certain that the meaning of the prophet is, that even they shall become partakers with himself of the same grace, who seem now to be turned into dust, and in whom no restoration from life to death is to be hoped for.

31 *Their seed shall serve him, it shall be counted to the Lord for a generation; they shall come and declare his righteousness to a people that shall be born, because he hath done it.*] The more to exalt the greatness of the benefit, he says it shall be such a one as may never be forgotten among those that shall come after. He expresses, however, the

manner of the continuing thereof, because the conversion of the world, of which he spake, shall not be for a moment only, but shall be spread abroad as long as time endures. Whence we gather again, that here is not set forth such a glory of God as, springing out of a transitory and fading rumour, extends to all nations; but such as with its beams shall enlighten the world even unto the end. Wherefore the continuance of the church is asserted here under a glorious encomium; not because it always flourishes, or holds on with uninterrupted evenness from time to time; but because God, unwilling to have his name quenched in the world, will always raise up some that shall worship him aright. And it is to be remembered, that this seed, wherein the service of God was to be preserved, is the fruit of the incorruptible seed; because, God begetteth not, nor spreadeth abroad his church otherwise than by his word. *To be counted to the Lord for a generation,* is expounded two ways. Some take the word דור for a succession of ages, and some for a generation, in which sense the word *natio* is used in the Latin tongue. Now as both these senses agree not amiss, but come in a manner to the same effect, the readers may have leave, for me, to choose which they will; saving that I confess I like better, that by this word should be betokened God's elect and peculiar nation, which may be accounted the heritage of God. Nevertheless, as here is not written the name *Jehova,* which is peculiar to God's essence, as a little before, but the word *Adonai,* I disallow not their opinion who think that Christ is expressly made head of the church, to register, as his people, all who have sworn themselves soldiers to God the Father; and now, because the heavenly Father hath delivered all his chosen to the protection and custody of his Son, he acknowledgeth none for his but such as are of Christ's flock. *They shall come and declare.* He confirms that which I have said before; namely, that because the fathers hand down the knowledge of the benefit to their children, from hand to hand, his name shall always be renowned. Whence also is gathered this other thing, that the preaching of grace alone is the cause that the church never perishes. At the same time is enjoined us the care and endeavour to spread abroad the true doctrine, that it may continue after our decease. For as the Holy Ghost assigns it as a duty, common to all the godly, to labour in bringing up their children, that a new generation may succeed to serve God; the sluggishness of those who have no remorse of conscience to bury the memorial of God so that it should never be spoken of, is justly condemned as a mark of the foulest turpitude. The name of righteousness

in this place is referred to the faithfulness which he keeps in preserving his servants, whereof the deliverance of David was a notable proof. For in defending his servant from the violence and injury of the wicked, he proved himself to be righteous. And hence we may gather how dear our welfare is to God, since he combines it with the commendation of his own righteousness. Now if the righteousness of God shine herein, that he disappoint not our hope, nor forsake us in perils, but keep us safe and sound under his protection; it is no more to be feared that he will fail us at our need, than that he forget himself. However, we must bear in mind, that the confession of praise is required at our hands in this place, not for any particular help, but for the redemption of mankind. To be brief; the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David commends to us the publishing of Christ's resurrection. In the end of the Psalm, some interpreters resolve the particle כי, into the pronoun אשר, as if it had been said, *the righteousness which he hath done.* Notwithstanding, it is a fuller expression to say, *because God hath given a proof of his righteousness,* shewing by the deed itself that he is a faithful keeper of those that are his.

PSALM XXIII.

This Psalm neither has prayers intermingled, nor bewails miseries, to crave relief; but contains a mere thanksgiving, wherein it appears that it was made at such time as David had gotten the kingdom in quietness, and lived prosperously and to his heart's content. Therefore, in the time of his mirth and prosperity, lest he might be like worldly men, who, when they seem fortunate to themselves, bury God, and luxuriously drown themselves in pleasures, he delights himself in the author of his prosperous state. And he not only acknowledges himself to live now quietly and free from all inconveniences and troubles by his benefit, but also trusts to continue happy to the end by his providence: and that to this end, that he may exercise himself in the pure worshipping of him.

[*A Song of David.*]

1 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

2 He maketh me to lie down in pastures of deep grass; he leadeth me to soft running waters.

3 He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me by ways of righteousness for his name sake.

4 Although I should walk in the valley of the shadow of death, yet will I fear no harm, because thou art with me; thy staff and thy sheep-hook they comfort me.

1 *The Lord is my shepherd.*] Although God allure us gently to him by his benefits, as it were with the taste of his fatherly sweetness, yet is there nothing to which we are more prone, than by little and little to forget him in time of peace and mirth. Yea rather, prosperity makes many so delirious, that they not only overleap all bounds in their joy, but it also begets insolence, so that they proudly fly in the face of God, and thus scarce the hundredth man keeps himself stayedly in the fear of God, while enjoying his good things. So much the more warily then must we mark this example of David, who, in the highest degree of dignity, in the glory of riches and honour, in the abundance of wealth, and in the midst of princely pleasures, not only testifies that he is mindful of God, but also makes himself ladders of his benefits, whereon to climb up nearer to him. And by this means he not only bridles the wantonness of his flesh, but also spurs himself on more sharply to thankfulness, and to the exercises of godliness; according as it appears by the close of the Psalm, where he says, *he will dwell in the house of the Lord all his life long.* So also in the eighteenth Psalm, when there was clapping of hands at him on all sides, he shews how his heart was framed to humility by calling himself the servant of God; and at the same time professed his thankfulness, in setting forth his praise. Moreover, under the similitude of a shepherd, he commends God's providence towards him; as if he had said, that God had no less care of him than the shepherd has of the sheep committed to him. Now in that God often in the scripture assumeth the name, and putteth on the character of a shepherd, it is no slight token of his tender love towards us; for seeing it is a lowly and homely manner of speaking, it must needs be that he is singularly well-affected towards us, that disdains not to stoop so low for our sake. It is a wonder, therefore, that so gentle and familiar an invitation should not allure us to him, to rest safely and quietly under his custody. But it is to be noted, that God is not the shepherd of any other than those who, acknowledging their own weakness and want, feel themselves to have need of his defence; and also who, willingly abiding in his sheepfold, yield themselves to be ruled by him. David, who excelled both in power and wealth, nevertheless confessed himself, willingly,

to be a sheep, that he might have God as his shepherd. Which of us, then, will exempt himself from this necessity, who are all of us convinced by our own weakness, to be more than miserable, unless we live under the protection of that shepherd? It behoves us, then, to bear in mind, that the sum of our felicity consists in this; that his hand be stretched out to govern us, that we live under his shadow, and that his providence keep watch for our welfare. Wherefore, although we have abundance of all things, yet must we know that our blessedness comes not elsewhere, than that God vouchsafeth to reckon us in his flock. Besides, then is the office of shepherd attributed with due and rightful honour unto God, when we are persuaded that his providence alone is enough for us. For as they are empty and hungry, even in most abundance, who have not God for their shepherd; so are we well assured that they whom he taketh charge of, shall want nothing to the full abundance of all good things. And therefore David says he is afraid of no want, because God feedeth him.

2 *In pastures of deep grass.*] As for the words; he hath put pastures, or fields of grass, for grazing and fat grounds; though some translate נאות shepherds' cots or cottages; and if this be preferred, the sense shall be that there are sheepcots prepared in rich pasture grounds, wherein to shroud him from the heat of the sun. For if too much heat be troublesome to a flock of sheep in cold countries, much less tolerable would summer be in Judah without sheepcots; whereunto also the word רבץ seems to be referred. He said *waters of rest*, for soft running; for swift brooks are incommodious, and for the most part unwholesome for sheep to drink of. In this verse, and in the verses following, David expounds that part, *I shall not want:* for he reports how liberally God had provided for him, not departing from the similitude which he used. But the whole comes to this; that the heavenly shepherd had omitted nothing that might make him live happily under his charge. Therefore he compares his large abundance of all things needful for the uses of this life, to meadows of deep grass, and waters flowing gently; or his commodiousness, unto sheepcots; because it had not been enough to have been fed to the full in good pasture, unless he had also had waters to drink, and shadow of the sheepcot to refresh him. And because it is also the duty of a good shepherd to cherish his sheep, or to recover them when they are weak, David declares that he receives this benefit at God's hand. For the restoring of the soul, as we have translated it, or the conversion of the soul, as it is word for word, imports to make again, or to repair, ac-

cording as hath been said already in the nineteenth Psalm. And he hath put *the ways of righteousness*, for easy and level ways: for considering that he persists in his metaphor, it were against reason to take it concerning the direction of the Holy Ghost. Therefore, as he said just now, that God ministereth bounteously to him, whatsoever things pertain to the maintenance of his life, so now he adds that he is defended from all trouble. The sum is, that God faileth not his faithful in any behalf, because he sustaineth, cherisheth, and quickeneth them by his power, and turneth away all annoyances from them, that they may walk comfortably in even and level ways. But not a thing does he impute to his own worthiness, declaring that he performeth all these things for his name's sake. And surely, that he selects us for his sheep and employs the offices of a shepherd upon us, is altogether a free benefit, as we shall see in the sixty-fifth Psalm.

4 *Although I should walk.*] Forasmuch as the faithful, although they dwell safely under the hand of God, are, notwithstanding, near many dangers; yea rather, they lie subject to all common miseries, that they may the better feel how necessary God's protection is to them; David declares here expressly, that if any adversity shall occur, he rests himself upon God's providence. Thus he does not promise himself continual pleasures, but fortifies himself with God's help even to endure sundry mishaps manfully. Moreover, persisting in his metaphor, he compares the care which God takes in governing the faithful, to a shepherd's sheephook and staff, saying he holds himself content therewith for the safeguard of his life. For as, if a sheep stray up and down in a dark dale, the presence only of the shepherd preserves it safe from the running in of wild beasts, and from other annoyances; so now David protests that as often as he shall fall into any danger, he thinks himself to have defence enough in the shepherdlike care of God. Now, then, we see that in his prosperous and pleasant estate he forgot not that he was a man, but did at that time forecast in his mind what adversities might ensue. And surely hence cometh our so great fearfulness when God exerciseth us with the cross, that every man, that he may sleep soundly, wallows in the carelessness of the flesh. But the repose of faith differs far from this slumber of drowsiness. Nay rather, seeing that God trieth our faith by adversity, it follows that no one has faith in deed, but he that is armed with invincible constancy to subdue all fears. Yet did not David boast himself to be void of all fear, but only that he should get the upperhand, so that he might go without fear, wheresoever his shepherd should lead him; which appears better by the context. First

he says, *I will be afraid of no harm;* and forthwith alleging the cause, he confesses openly that he seeks the remedy of his fear in having his thoughts fixed on his shepherd's staff. For to what purpose were that *comfort*, were it not that fear disquieted him? It is to be remembered therefore, that when David considered in his mind the inconveniences that might befall him, he became not the conqueror of temptations otherwise, than because he had thrown himself on the guardianship of God; which, though somewhat obscurely, he had before said, even in this member; *because thou art with me.* For had he been void of fear, he would not have needed the presence of God. Besides this, he sets not God's defence against common and daily inconveniences only, but against such as confound men's minds with mists. For among the Hebrew grammarians, צלמות seems to be a compound word, as if a man should say, *deadly shade.* And David alludes to the dark lairs, or the dens of wild beasts, whereinto if a man come, forthwith at the first entrance he meets with the fear of death. Now when God in the person of his only-begotten Son, hath exhibited himself our shepherd, much more evidently than to the fathers in old time under the law, we yield not sufficient honour to his protection, unless by fastening our eyes upon it, we tread all fears under our feet.

5 Thou shalt prepare a table before me in the sight of my persecutors; thou shalt anoint my head with oil; my cup overflowing.

6 Doubtless, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord a long season.

5 *Thou shalt prepare.*] The words of the future tense betoken in this place a continued act. David, therefore, repeats now without figure, the things which he has shewn hitherto by the similitude of a shepherd, concerning the bounteousness of God. For he says that through his liberality are ministered to him whatsoever things are needful to the maintenance of his life. *To prepare a table* implies to give a man sustenance without trouble or care to him, as if a father should reach his son meat. And he enhances this benefit by adding a circumstance, that although many malicious persons envy him, and wish he were destroyed, or rather went about to defraud him of the blessing of God; yet God ceaseth not to shew himself liberally and bounteous. What he adds concerning *oil*, pertains to the custom of those days. For we know that in costly banquets and feasts they used also unguents, so that no man seemed to have entertained his

guests sumptuously, unless they were anointed with unguents. Moreover, the exuberant supply of oil, as well as the overflowing cup, ought to be referred to the abundance which exceeds needful uses: for it is a commendation of that royal wealth wherewith the holy scripture witnesses him to have been not meanly stored. Now then, although all men are not dealt with alike liberally, yet is there not any to be found whom God bindeth not with his bounteousness; so that we must needs confess that he is a liberal father to all that are his. In the mean time let each man provoke himself to thankfulness for his more plentiful abundance of gifts: for if he be a churl that acknowledges not God's fatherly providence in a loaf of household bread, how much less tolerable will be the insensibility of those who cram themselves with abundance of all things without taste of God's goodness? David, therefore, by his own example, puts the rich men in mind of their duty, that the more indulgently God feedeth them, so much the more willingly should they burst forth into thanksgiving. Nevertheless we must bear in mind, that even they who have larger means than others, are bound to observe a moderation, no less than if their ability served them for limited and chastened enjoyment. For as we are by nature over prone to excess, God is not therefore bountiful to the faithful, to stir up this disease in them. For all men must hold this rule of Paul, Philip. iv. 12, that they may know as well how to abound, as also to suffer scarcity. And lest want may cast us down, we had need to be sustained by habits of endurance. Again; lest plenty may puff us up above measure, we had need to be reined in with the bridle of temperance. The Lord also when he enricheth the faithful, doth therewith restrain the wanton lusts of the flesh by the spirit of continence, so that they prescribe a measure to themselves of their own accord. Not that it is not lawful for rich men to enjoy their present plenty more freely, than if God dealt straitly with them; but because it behoves all men to beware, (yea, even kings themselves,) that they wallow not away in pleasures and riotousness. For, although David, as he lawfully might, took larger scope to himself than if he had been some one of the common sort, or than if he had continued still in his father's cottage, yet he moderated himself in his delicateness, so that he pampered not himself with fatness; whence it came to pass, that he could put a difference between the table that was prepared for him by God, and a hog's trough. This also is worth noting, that although David lived upon the lands, customs, and other revenues of the realm, yet he gave thanks to God as if he had from day to day received his

meat at his hand: whence we gather, that he was not blinded with his riches, but made God always master of his household, to bring forth meat and drink out of his store-house, and to distribute it in due season.

6 *Doubtless, goodness and mercy.*] After he has reckoned up the graces that God had bestowed upon him; now he extends the continuance of them even to his life's end. And from whence is this confidence, that he should warrant God's liberality and mercy to accompany him for evermore, but from the promise wherewith God is wont to season his benefits towards the faithful, lest they should be devoured heedlessly with a palate out of taste? For before, when he said to himself, that even in the darkness of death his eyes should be bent to behold the providence of God; he witnessed sufficiently, that he hung not upon outward things, nor measured God's grace by the carnal understanding; but that his faith remained shut up in the word of God, even when all earthly helps failed. Therefore, although experience allured him to hope well, yet he chiefly embraced the promise wherewith God confirmeth his servants for the time to come. If any body object that it is rashness for a man to promise to himself an even course of prosperous fortune in this transitory life; I answer, that David said not so to impose a law upon God; but because, as much as the state of the world permits, he hoped for God's goodness towards him, wherewith he would hold himself contented. For he says not that his cup shall be always full, or his head always perfumed with unguents; but, in general, because God's goodness is exhaustless, he gathers that he will be bountiful to him to the end. *I will dwell in the house of the Lord.* By this clause he shews openly, that he sets not himself upon earthly pleasures or comforts; but that the mark which he shoots at, is in heaven, at which he levels all things. For it is as if he had said, that he lives not to live only, but rather to exercise himself in the fear and service of God, and to profit in all the ways of godliness from day to day. For he makes a manifest difference between himself and worldly men, that think it enough to stuff their paunch with good fare. And besides this, he gives us to understand, that he makes so great an account of living unto God, that he measures all comforts of the flesh by the same. He affirms openly, that the end which he looked at in all the benefits which he had received of God, was to dwell in the house of the Lord. Whence it follows, that if the fruition of this goodness were taken away, he made no account of all other things; as if he had said, he had delight in earthly comforts no otherwise, than if he

might at the same time be of God's flock; as he writes in another place, *They shall call the people blessed that are in such a case; blessed are the people that have the Lord for their God;* Psalm cxliv. 15. For to what purpose should he covet so greatly to be in the temple, but to offer sacrifices together with others, and to further himself to the minding of the heavenly life by other exercises of faith? Sure it is, therefore, that David was lifted up to the hope of the everlasting inheritance, by help of the goods of this world. Whence we gather, that those men are brutish, who propose to themselves any other felicity than to come unto God.

PSALM XXIV.

Whereas God hath created all mankind, and holdeth them under his government; David magnifies the grace which he hath vouchsafed to his elect people, by this comparison; namely, that he hath reared the sanctuary as it were a house to dwell in among the children of Abraham. And therewith he shews, that although the sanctuary was open for all the Jews, come who would; yet was not God near to every one of them, but only to the true followers of godliness, who had purged themselves from the filthiness of the world, in order to addict themselves to holiness and righteousness. Moreover, forasmuch as God's grace appeared yet more evidently after the building of the temple, he commends the same grace with a splendid encomium, that the faithful may go forward the more cheerfully in their zeal to honour it.

[*A Song of David.*]

1 The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and all that dwell therein.

2 For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

3 Who shall go up into the hill of the Lord? who shall stand in the place of his holiness?

4 He that is clean of hands and pure of heart, that hath not lift up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn in deceitfulness.

The earth is the Lord's.] We shall in many other places see the children of Abraham compared with the rest of the world, that God's free goodness towards them, in embracing them with his favour before all other nations, may appear the better thereby. The beginning of the Psalm therefore tends to this purpose; that the Jews have nothing of themselves, that they should press nearer or more

familiarly unto God, than the Gentiles. For seeing that God preserveth the world in due state by his providence, the power of his government is extended to all alike, so that he deserveth to be worshipped everywhere, as he sheweth to all men without exception, his fatherly care for them. Furthermore; seeing he hath preferred the Jews before all other nations, it is right that there should intervene some holy bond of alliance between him and them, which may discern them from heathen men. The reason whereby David allures and exhorts them to holiness, is because it is right that those whom God hath adopted as his children, should bear their proper marks, that they might not be altogether like strangers. Not that he stirs them to prevent God in purchasing themselves his favour; but from the end of their election he admonishes them, that the possession of their honour shall then be ratified and established, when they give themselves to lead a godly and upright life. For in vain had they been gathered by themselves for the peculiar people of God, if they should not apply themselves to holiness. To be brief; he avouches God to be king of the whole world, that all men should be bound to serve him even by the law of nature. Again; in declaring that he hath made his covenant of salvation with a small part of men, and hath given the children of Abraham the pledge of his presence by the erection of the tabernacle, that they might thereby be assured that he dwelleth in the midst of them; he teaches that men ought to endeavour to have pureness of heart and hands, if they will be accounted of his household. Although I confess that in the word *fulness* is comprised all the riches wherewith the earth is garnished, which is proved by the authority of Paul, nevertheless, I doubt not, but he designates men themselves, who are the most glorious ornament and beauty of the earth. For if they failed, the earth would exhibit a scene of ruin and desolation as hideous as if God should bereave it of all the riches which it has. For to what purpose serve such manifold fruits, such great abundance and loveliness, but that the use and comfort thereof may redound to men? therefore in the next member David unfolds his meaning, that he speaks chiefly of men. For as it his wont to repeat one thing twice, *the fulness of the earth* and *the inhabiters of the world* have the same import: and yet I deny not, that the treasures wherewith the world abounds for man's behoof, are comprehended therewith. Well, therefore, doth Paul, 1 Cor. x. 26, when he treats of meats, establish, by this evidence, that no kind of food is unclean, because *the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof.*

2 *For he hath founded it, &c.*] He confirms that men are of right under the hand of God, and may everywhere know him to be king of the world; yea, even by the very orderliness of the creation, because the wonderful providence of God is reflected openly in the whole face of the earth. And he takes that for a proof of it, which is most evident. For how comes it to pass that the earth appears above the water, but that God, of purpose, meant to prepare man a place to sojourn in? for even the philosophers confess, that, as the water is a higher element than the earth, it is a result against nature that any region continues dry and habitable. And therefore this notable miracle is magnificently lauded in Job xxviii. 25; that God restrains the violent ragings of the sea, lest the earth, being in a moment overwhelmed, a horrible confusion should ensue. Neither is this passed over with silence by Moses, in the creation. For after he has declared that the waters were spread forth so that they covered the whole earth, he adds that they gave place by the special command of God, so that they left a space unoccupied for the living things that were to be created afterwards; Gen. i. 9: hence we gather that God had a care of men before they were, as he prepared a dwelling-place and other conveniences for them, and accounted them not utterly as strangers, seeing he provided no less liberally for them, than the householder does for his own children. Now although David dispute not philosophically concerning the situation of the earth, when he says, it is founded upon the seas; but speaking popularly, adapts himself to the capacity of the uninstructed; yet, still this manner of speaking which is taken from the mere light, is not void of reason. Indeed the element of earth, as in respect of its spherical order it holds the lowest place, sinks underneath the waters. But seeing that the habitable part of it is above the water; whence can we say that this distinction abides stable, but because the waters are set underneath, like a foundation, by the power of God? Now if God have extended his fatherly care to all mankind even from the beginning of the world, the prerogative of honour, wherein the Jews excel all others, springs out of free choice.

3 *Who shall go up.*] As it was sufficiently known of itself, to be the mere grace of God that he chose himself a dwelling-place among the Jews by setting up his sanctuary, it is touched on here but by implication. But David lays chief stress upon the other member, how he may discern the true Israelites from the false. For hereupon grounds he his argument to exhort the Jews to holy and righteous conversation, because they are set apart by God, to be his peculiar

possession. For although the rest of mankind, in respect that they were created by him, pertain to his jurisdiction; yet, he approaches nearest to him, who obtains a place in the church. As many, then, as God admitteth into his flock, so many calleth he to holiness by the very adoption. Moreover, by these words, David glances at the hypocrites, who made no conscience in pretending falsely the holy name of God, as we know how they vaunt themselves only of vain titles and outward shew; yea rather sets he purposely out this singular grace of God, that every man may learn for himself that he is prohibited coming within the sanctuary unless he sanctify himself to the pure service of God. True it is that the ungodly and wicked resorted to the tabernacle, and therefore by the prophet Isaiah, i. 12, God upbraideth them for wearing the pavement of his court unworthily. But in this place David treats of such as may enter in by right: for seeing that the house of God is holy; if any rush in thither amiss, and against right, the corruptness and abuse of them is nothing but a defiling of it. Therefore, as their going up thither is unlawful, David accounts it as no going up; yea, rather under these words is included a sore rebuke, that unclean men dare go up into the sanctuary and defile it with their impurity. Of which matter I have spoken more in Psalm xv; nevertheless, in the second part of the verse he seems to betoken perseverance, as if he had said, Who shall go up into the hill of Zion, to stand in the sight of God? I confess that the word קוּם, signifies to rise up; it is, however, taken for the most part for to stand, as has been seen in the first Psalm. And although it be a repetition of the same thing, yet is it not simply so, but augments the matter by shewing to what end they go up, as he does often elsewhere. The whole of it is this; howsoever the evil were mingled with the good in the church in the time of David, yet he declares how vain the outward profession is, if there go not inward truth with it. For that which he speaks concerning the tabernacle of the covenant, must be applied to the continual government of the church.

4 *He that is clean of hands.*] Under the pureness of the hands and the heart, and the reverence of God's name, he comprehends all godliness, and denotes the well-ordered life. Indeed, true pureness has its seat in the heart, but it displays its fruits in the works of the hands. Advisedly therefore is the cleanness of the whole life joined to a pure heart, because it is folly for a man to boast that he has a sound heart, if he shew not by his fruits that the root is good. Neither, on the other hand, shall it suffice to frame the hands, feet, and eyes, according to the rule of righteousness, unless

pureness of heart go before outward continence. If any man shall think it absurd that the hands are placed foremost, the answer is ready, that effects are oftentimes named before their causes, not that they go before them in order, but because it is advantageous occasionally to begin with the things that are best known. David would, therefore, that the Jews should bring pure hands into the sight of God; yea, and that even with an unfeigned heart. I doubt not that *to lift up*, or *to take the soul*, is put for to swear. Therefore there is required of God's servants, a conscience in taking oaths. And by the figure synecdoche, under one particular are denoted faithfulness and uprightness in all affairs. And that here mention is made of oaths, one may gather by the expository member which is added directly after, where he says, *and hath not sworn to deceive*. Still, as there is a twofold reading in the word *soul*, that is to say, it may be read *my soul* or *his soul*, by reason of the point *Hirek*, some Hebrew interpreters take the relative of the first person to be meant of God himself, which I reject as harsh and constrained. It is an emphatic manner of speaking, whereby is meant that they who swear, offer their souls as pledges to God. Unless perhaps it be preferred that, *to lift up the soul* should be put for, to *apply it to lying*, which interpretation I leave for those to adopt who like it, for it makes little difference in the sense. However, here arises a question, why David speaks not so much as one word concerning faith and calling upon God; but it is easily answered: for as it seldom happens that a man behaves himself uprightly and innocently towards his brethren, unless he be so endued with the true fear of God that he walk warily in his sight, David does not amiss to estimate godliness by these records. In which respect, Christ, in Matt. xxiii. 23, calls mercy, judgment, and faith, the chief points of the law. And charity is termed by Paul sometimes the end of the law, 1 Tim. i. 5, and sometimes the bond of perfection, Col. iii. 14.

5 He shall receive a blessing of the Lord, and righteousness of the God of his salvation.

6 This is the generation of them that seek him, of them that seek after thy face, O Jacob. Selah.

5 *He shall receive.*] That he may move their minds the more effectually, he tells them that nothing is more to be wished, than to be numbered in God's flock, and among the household of the church. And here is to be remembered the an-

tithesis between the true Israelites and the degenerate. For the more scope the wicked give themselves, so much the more presumptuously pretend they the name of God, as if they had him at their command, because they are bedecked with the same outward tokens as the faithful: therefore the demonstrative pronoun *this*, in the verse following, is not without weight, for it expressly shuts out all that adulterous generation, which was proud of the mere visor of ceremonies. And now when he speaks of blessing, he testifies, that not all they which in title only vaunt themselves for worshippers of God, shall be partakers of the promised blessing, but they that answer their calling, from the heart. Howbeit, as I have said already, it is a very effectual encouragement to godliness and good life, when the faithful hear that they misspend not their labour in following righteousness, because there is an assured blessing laid up for them with God. The word *righteousness* may be expounded two ways; either for all the benefits of God, whereby he proves himself to be righteous and true towards the faithful, or for the fruit of righteousness. Truly, David's meaning is not at all doubtful; namely, that it is not for such men to look to obtain the fruit of righteousness, as unrighteously dishonour God's holy service; and again, that it is not possible that God should disappoint his true worshippers, because it is his property to avouch his righteousness by benefits.

6 *This is the generation.*] I told you just now that by this declaration, all counterfeit Israelites who, trusting only to circumcision, and the sacrificing of beasts, are regardless of offering themselves to God, and yet in the meanwhile thrust themselves rashly into the church, are stricken out of the register of God's servants. For as for such, although they pretend to be possessed with a zeal for God, yet purpose they nothing else by their coming to the temple, but to withdraw themselves further from him. And as nothing was more common in the mouths of them all, than that they were all a holy seed; he restrained the name of holy generation, to the pure observers of the law; as if he had said, Not all that are begotten of Abraham, according to the flesh, are therefore Abraham's legitimate children. It is truly said in many other places, as we shall see in Psalm xxvii. that those seek the face of God, who exercise themselves in the ceremonies before the ark of the covenant, to testify their godliness; that is to say, if sincere affection bring them thither. But because the hypocrites have a certain outward shew of seeking the face of God, as well as the godly, and yet by their crooked ways shun him; David says plainly in this place, that God's face

is not sought aright, but where the hearty endeavour after holiness and righteousness goes before. And that the sentence may have the greater emphasis, David, repeating it in the second person, turns his discourse to God; for it is the same as if he cited the hypocrites, who make nothing of falsely using God's name before the world, to the judgment-seat of God himself; intimating that whatsoever they prate among men, God's judgment shall be otherwise. The name *Jacob*, is put in collectively for the confirmation of the same doctrine; as if he had said, Although circumcision sever the whole fleshly offspring of Jacob from the Gentiles, yet cannot the chosen people be otherwise known, than by the fear and awe of God; as Christ said, *This is a true Israelite, in whom there is no guile;* John i. 47.

7 Lift up your heads, ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall enter in.

8 Who is this King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, even the Lord, mighty in battle.

9 Lift up your heads, ye gates; lift up, I say, your everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

10 Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.

7 *Lift up your heads.*] Because that exceeding great gloriousness of the temple, wherein there was more outward majesty than in the tabernacle, was not as yet to be seen, David preaches here of the future building of it. And by this means he encourages the faithful to employ themselves in the ceremonies of the law more willingly and with more confidence. For it was no small benefit of God, that God dwelt in the midst of them by a visible symbol, and was willing that his heavenly dwelling should be seen upon earth. And the use of this doctrine ought to prevail among us also at this day; that forasmuch as the grace of God is above price, we, so far as the weakness of the flesh will suffer us, must lift up ourselves to God by the exercises of godliness. For to what purpose serve the preaching of the word, the sacraments, the holy assemblies themselves, and all the outward discipline of the church, but to join us to God? not without cause, therefore, does David extol the service of the law with so glorious a commendation, seeing that God offereth himself to the faithful in the ark of the covenant,

and gave them an assured warrant of his present help, as often as he were called upon. Now although God dwelleth not in temples made with hands, nor hath delight in outward pomps; yet forasmuch as it was for the behoof of these rude, and as it were childish people, and also the pleasure of God, that they should be lifted up to him by earthly elements; David hesitates not here to set forth the sumptuous building of the temple, for the confirmation of faith, that the Jews might assure themselves that the same was not a theatre of vanity, but such a place as whensoever they worshipped God aright, according to the appointment of his word, he stood before their eyes, so that they might feel him to be present by his works. The sum therefore is, that by how much the temple that God commanded to be built unto him upon mount Sion, beat the tabernacle in splendour; so much brighter a mirror should it be of the glory and power of God dwelling among the Jews. Meanwhile, as he himself burned with ineffable longing for the temple; so he kindled the same ardour in the hearts of the godly, that they might profit more in the fear of God, aided by the rudiments of the law. He terms the gates *everlasting*, in that the continual stableness of them was founded upon the word of God. For although the temple excelled in materials and workmanship, yet the chief excellence thereof consisted in this, that God's promise was engraven upon the dwelling, which promise we shall see in another place. *This is my resting place, for ever and ever;* Psalm cxxxii. 14. Howbeit, I doubt not but that there is to be understood an antithesis to the tabernacle. For seeing that the tabernacle never had any certain abiding place, but being received into diverse lodgings from time to time, did after a sort travel as a wayfarer; the abiding place of God began to be then certain, when mount Sion was chosen out. Now then, as that visible shadow has vanished by the coming of Christ, it is no marvel that the temple is not to be seen upon mount Sion, since the amplitude thereof covers the whole world. If any man object that the gates which Solomon built were beaten down in the captivity of Babylon; I answer, that God's decree stood fast in that temporary overthrow; by the efficacy whereof, soon after followed the restoration; which was all one as if it had endured always entire. The Greek translator has from ignorance corrupted this place. For although the Hebrews now and then, in way of metaphor, call princes ראשים, yet the relative annexed, admits none other sense, than that the gates should lift up their heads: for otherwise we must say, *the princes of you*, or *your princes*. Therefore some will have it, that

in this place kings and magistrates are put in mind of their duty, that they should set open an entrance to God; but although it be a plausible device, yet is it far from the meaning and words of the prophet. But how foolishly and shamefully the papists have abused this place to their gross mockeries whereby they bring in Christ penetrating to hell, appears too abundantly by the natural sense of the words. But let us learn hereby to handle God's holy word soberly and reverently, and to abhor papists, who make as it were a sport of perverting it with their horrible impieties, as it were with the boldness of impunity.

8. *Who is this?*] The titles wherewith God's power is extolled serve to this purpose; that the Jews may know that he sits not idle in his temple, but is in readiness to help his servants. Moreover, there is a great force as well in the interrogation as in the reiteration of the same sentence: for the prophet takes upon him the person of one that wonders, that he may the more effectually teach that God is furnished indeed with invincible power to maintain the welfare of his people, so that the faithful may be in safety under his shadow. It has been said already that God dwelt not in the temple, as though his measureless essence had been enclosed therein, but that it was the presence of his power and grace, as the promise made unto Moses imported; *when I shall have set a memorial to my name I will come to thee and bless thee,* Exod. xx. 24. That this was not promised in vain, but that God stood in the midst of them indeed, was felt by the faithful, that sought him not superstitiously, as fastened to the temple, but, by the help of the outward service of the temple, pressed onward to heaven. The grand conclusion is, that as often as the people should call upon God in the temple, it should appear openly, by the very effect, that the ark of the covenant was not a vain and illusory symbol of God's presence, because God would always stretch out his mighty hand to maintain the welfare of the faithful. The repetition of it warns us that the faithful cannot be too instant and too much occupied in meditating on this matter. And since the Son of God, being clothed with flesh, hath shewn himself to be the King of glory and Lord of hosts, he is entered into his temple, not in a shadowy figure only, but in very deed, to dwell in the midst of us. Wherefore there is no hindrance why we may not boast that we shall be invincible through his power. And although at this day neither mount Sion is the place appointed for the sanctuary, nor the ark of the covenant is any more the image of God dwelling between the cherubim, yet inasmuch as the fathers and we stand in the same predicament for the

preaching of the word, and the sacraments should join us unto God, it becomes us to embrace these helps reverently, because it cannot be but that God will at length utterly withdraw himself from us, if with impious disdain they are set at nought.

PSALM XXV.

This Psalm contains meditations mingled with prayers: for David, being sorely vexed with the cruelty of his enemies, in order that he may obtain help at God's hand, first acknowledges that his sins are justly punished by that means by God himself: and therefore he desires forgiveness of them, that he may have his favour and deliverance. Afterwards he calls for the grace of the Holy Ghost, upon assurance whereof to stay himself in the fear of God in the midst of his sundry temptations. And in divers places he intermingles meditations, wherewith he either stirs himself up to hope well, or brings home his thoughts to God from the enticements of the world.

[*A Psalm of David.*]

1 Unto thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul.
2 My God, in thee have I trusted: let me not be put to shame, let not mine enemies triumph over me.
3 Yea, all they that wait upon thee shall not be ashamed: they shall be ashamed that deal falsely without cause.

1 *Unto thee, O Lord.*] He protests that he is not carried about hither and thither after the manner of unbelievers; but directs all his hope and desires to God alone. For nothing is more contrary to true and sincere calling upon God, than waveringly to gaze about whether any worldly help be coming to our succour, as heathenish men are wont to do; and in the meanwhile either to let go of God, or else not to betake oneself directly to his protection. For they who think that David avouches himself to have been wholly given over to God as if he had offered up himself in sacrifice, understand not sufficiently the meaning of the text. Rather, for the better assurance of speeding, he takes him to what is of greatest importance in prayer, namely, that he had his hope fixed in God, and that he was not hindered or held back with the enticements of the world, but mounted up free and unconfined to God. Wherefore let this be a rule for us of praying aright unto God, not to be haled divers ways by sundry and doubtful hopes, nor to stay upon

earthly helps, but to yield God so much honour as to lift up our desires unto him from the bottom of our heart. Notwithstanding, in altering the tense of the verb, I have followed other interpreters, though by the future tense he denotes a continued act.

2 *My God, in thee have I trusted.*] By this verse we gather, which will appear more clearly hereafter, that David had to do with men. But as he was persuaded that his foes were, as it were, God's scourges, he does well to desire to have them held back by his hand, that they become not more insolent. By the word trust, he confirms what I said just now of the lifting up of the soul to God: for so either is expressed the manner how the faithful souls lift themselves up, or else confidence and hope are added, as the cause of that effect or lifting up. And surely these are the wings whereon, being lift out of the world, we are conveyed upward. David, therefore, was carried up to God by the longings that filled his soul; because, upon trust of his promises, he hoped for sure salvation thereby. The deprecation which he uses is taken out of the ordinary doctrine of the scripture, that they can never be put to shame whosoever trust in God. Also this method of his for provoking God's mercy is to be marked: how he desires that he may not be subject to the scoffs of his enemies, the depravity of whom does no less challenge God himself to displeasure than it wounds the hearts of the godly.

3 *Yea, all they that wait upon thee.*] If you set down the words in the form of wishing, David in this verse continues his praying, and extends in common to all the faithful what he had spoken of himself alone. But I incline rather to the contrary sense: namely, that David should shew the fruit of God's grace, which proceeds from his delivering. Also there is a latent weight in the word *yea;* for as he knew how many men's eyes were set upon him, and that his confidence in God was not unseen, he means that his example extends far, that is, to the raising up of all the children of God, and to the overthrowing of the haughtiness of the wicked. There might be also another sense; as though David, for the confirmation of his own faith, should set before himself what God promiseth indiscriminately. But the interpretation I have adduced seems to be fittest, for no doubt, by the wicked that deal falsely without cause, he means peculiarly his enemies. Therefore when he shall be delivered, he teaches us that it is a peculiar benefit, whose fruit shall nevertheless extend to all men: like as it could not be, but that the faith of many had quailed, if he had been forsaken of God. He reasons in the contrary member,

that if the wicked lie confounded, it tends to the glory of God, because their vaunting of themselves in their prosperity is an open mocking of God, while, in despite of his judgment, they run more boldly into licentiousness of sinning. When he adds, *without cause*, it avails to aggravate their offence; for less endurable is the depravity of that man who, being unprovoked by wrongs, is impelled, of his own mere motion, to hurt unoffending men.

4 Make me to understand thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths.

5 Lead me forth in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my welfare; I have waited for thee all the day long.

6 O Lord, remember thy pitifulness and goodness: for they have been from everlasting.

7 The transgressions of my youth and mine iniquities remember thou not: according to thy mercy think upon me, for thy goodness sake, O Lord.

4 *Make me.*] By the ways of the Lord, David means, sometimes, joyful and saving success, as has been seen elsewhere: but most commonly he means the rule of a holy and righteous life. Here, because soon after there is added *truth*, the effect of his prayer is, in my judgment, that God should keep his servant in the belief of his promises, and not suffer him to slip aside one way or other: for when our minds are so composed to patience, we attempt nothing amiss if we depend wholly upon God's providence. Therefore in this place David desires not simply to be ruled by God's Spirit, that he might not turn aside from the right course, but to have it shewn openly to him how true and faithful God is in his promises, that he may live quietly under his eye. If any man had rather it should be a general sense, as though David should commit himself to the governance of God, I am not for making any great opposition. Notwithstanding, as I think it probable that under the name of truth in the next verse, there is shewn what are the ways and paths that he speaks of, I hesitate not to refer this request to the present circumstance; that is to say, that David, being afraid either of impatience or of thirst of revenge, or of some unlawful heat, requires to have God's promises thoroughly engraven in his heart. For I have said before, that as long as this thought lives in our minds, namely, that God takes charge of us, it is the best bridle that can be to tame temptations. But if it is thought well

to take God's ways and paths for his doctrine, with me it is a settled point, that David has an eye to the blind impulses that throw us headlong into endless errors when we are buffeted with adversities, until they are either restrained or tranquillised by God's word. And so the sense is this: Whatsoever betide, Lord suffer me not to fall from thy ways, or to be carried away by wilfulness, or by any depraved lust; but rather let thy truth keep me pacified in quiet obedience. And it is not superfluous that he harps upon having the ways of God opened unto him, and upon being taught and directed in them. For inasmuch as adversities mystify our senses, every man's own experience may teach him how hard a matter it is to discern, in that dimness, what we ought to follow. Now if David, being so excellent a prophet, and endued with so great light of understanding, needed this direction, what will become of us, if God drive not away the mists in our afflictions, that they hinder not the beholding of his light? Therefore, as often as any temptation troubles us, we must pray that God's truth may shine before us, lest, by seeking crooked devices, we be lost in tortuous mazes. The rendering of the cause that is added, is to be marked: for in calling him the God of his health, what benefits he had received at his hands heretofore, he applies to the hope of the time to come, and afterwards repeats his confidence again. So the first argument is grounded upon the nature of God himself, and as it were upon his appropriate office: that is, because he takes upon him to maintain the welfare of the faithful, and succour their necessities, upon this understanding, that it is his will to follow up the same favour to the end. But because it is necessary that our trust should answer this his so great goodness, David brings forth the same also with a record of his perseverance. For *all the day long*, or *every day*, signifies that he hung upon God only with tireless constancy. And it is the property of faith to have an eye to God in the greatest extremities of anguish, and as it were with silent content to recline upon his promised help. For the rest, that the remembrance of God's benefits may uphold and maintain our hope, let us learn to consider of what sort he hath shewn himself towards us already, like as David made himself this buttress, that he had proved God to be the author of his welfare.

6 *O Lord, remember.*] First, it appears hereby that David was sore distressed, so that he was in a manner bereft of all taste of God's mercy. For he puts God in remembrance of his grace just as if he had quite forgotten it. This, therefore, is the complaint of a man that is not a little sorrowful

and pensive. Howbeit, we gather hereby, that although God for a time withdraw all token of his goodness, and wink at our adversities as though he forsook us as strangers, yet we must wrestle manfully until our mind may break out of this temptation to the prayer which we hear; namely, that God, as it were returning to his former wont, should begin to deal with us again more mercifully. For this form of praying can have no place but at such time as he hides his face from us, and makes as though he had no regard at all of us. Again; David, in fleeing to God's pity and goodness, testifies that he presumed nothing upon hope of his own deservings. For he that draws comfort out of the fountain of God's mercy alone, finds nothing in himself that may bind God to a recompense. But because an interruption closed the way of his access, he overcomes this hinderance with the best of remedies; namely, that God, who is merciful by nature, although he withhold his hand for a while, can, notwithstanding, either renounce himself, or put off the feeling of mercy inherent in him, which can no more decay in him than can his everlasting being. This doctrine must we hold to, that God hath been merciful from the beginning; so that if at any time he seem inflexible and inexorable towards us, yet must we not think him to be unlike himself, or that he hath changed his purpose. And hereby we gather, to what end the scripture reports everywhere, that in all ages he looked mercifully upon his servants. For this must stand for a principle; that although God's goodness now and then lie hid, as though it were buried, yet is it never quenched.

7 *The transgressions of my youth.*] Because our sins set a wall between us and God, so that he heareth not our prayers nor stretcheth out his hand to help us, David removes that impediment. True it is indeed, generally, that men pray preposterously, and to no purpose, if they begin not with seeking forgiveness of their sins. For there is no hope of obtaining grace, unless God be at one with us. But how shall he love us, unless he first reconcile us freely unto him? The rightful order of praying, therefore, as I said, is, at the first approach to crave forgiveness of our sins. But David has here confessed, expressly, that he shall not be partaker of God's grace otherwise than if his sins be put away. Therefore, that God may be mindful of his own goodness, it is needful that he forget our sins, the sight whereof turns his favour from us. And now he confirms more clearly what I spake before: namely, that though the wicked raged against him without a cause, yet he imputed to his sins whatsoever he suffered. For wherefore should

he, in fleeing unto God's mercy, desire forgiveness of his sins, but because he acknowledges himself to suffer just punishment? Wisely, therefore, turneth he his mind to the first cause of the mischief, that he may find the true remedy. And so by his example he teaches us that, when any outward affliction bows us, we must not only beseech God to deliver us from the same, but also to blot out our sins, whereby we have provoked both his displeasure and scourges. Otherwise we shall follow the example of unskilful physicians, who, neglecting the causes of diseases, only assuage the pain, and minister only adventitious soothings to heal the malady with. And David not only confesses his light offences, as hypocrites do, who, confessing their guiltiness perfunctorily, in one word, either seek subterfuges or palliate its atrocity, but traces back, even from his very childhood, by how many ways he had provoked God's wrath against him. For he does not, therefore, make mention of the sins that he committed in his youth, as if he knew not himself guilty of any later fault, but to bind himself in the greater criminality. And first, reflecting that it was not of late that he had begun to sin, but that he had long since heaped sins upon sins, he in a manner bows himself down under the accumulated load. Again; if God should deal with him according to rigour of law, he intimates that not yesterday's sins, or the sins of a few days, shall come into judgment, but that whatsoever he had offended in since he was a child, might justly be laid to his charge now. Therefore, as often as God shall frighten us with the judgments of his wrath, not only let us call to mind our latest faults, but let all the misdeeds of our former life minister to us new shame, new groanings. Moreover, that he may better express that he craves free pardon, he brings nothing before God, but his mere goodness; and therefore he says, *Be mindful of me, according to thy mercy.* For the forgetting of our sins, on God's part, makes him to behold us with fatherly eyes. And of this beholding he sees no other cause but that God is good: whence it follows, that there is nothing else that leads God to take us into his favour but his own goodness. Still, when God is said to be mindful of us, according to his mercy, there must be understood to be a direct opposition between the two sorts of *remembering:* namely, when he visiteth sinners in his wrath, and when he vouchsafeth his favour again to those whom he seemed to despise for awhile.

8 Good and righteous is the Lord; therefore will he teach sinners in the way.

9 He will guide the poor in judgment, and teach the poor his way.

10 All the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth, to them that keep his covenant and his testimony.

11 For thy name's sake, O Lord, be merciful to mine iniquity, for it is great.

8 *Good and righteous.*] Pausing awhile, as it were, from the continued course of his prayer, he muses upon the goodness of God, that he may kindle himself the more again. For the faithful perceive that if they stir not up themselves from time to time with new incitements, their minds become faint soon, so rare and difficult a thing is steadfast and unwearied heedfulness: and assuredly, as to keep a fire one must lay on wood, so the earnestness of praying has need of such helps, lest it were dull and at length fail. Wherefore David, purposing to encourage himself in persevering, speaks to himself, and avouches God to be good and righteous, that being refreshed by this meditating, he may rise the more cheerfully again to praying. And this consequence is to be noted; that God, because he is good and righteous, reacheth out his hand to sinners, to bring them into the way again. For, to attribute uprightness to God, which he may employ only towards the worthy and those that have deserved well, is a frigid and jejune imagination; and yet the world commonly knows God to be good no otherwise. For how comes it to pass that scarce the hundredth person apply God's mercy to themselves, but that they restrain it to those that are worthy? But here he is said to give a proof of his righteousness, when he teacheth the transgressors in his way, which implies as much as to call them to repentance, and to instruct them how to live well. And surely, unless God's goodness pierce even to hell, it shall never come at any man. Let the papists boast of their feigned preparations; but let us assure ourselves that if God prevent not men with his grace, they are all forlorn. This preventing grace, as they term it, does David commend here; namely, either when God, at the first calling of us, renews our corrupt nature by the spirit of regeneration, or when he draws us back again from our rebellion after our sins have plucked us from him. For seeing that even they are called sinners whom God receiveth to be his disciples, it follows that they are renewed by his Spirit, that they may become apt and obedient.

9 *He will guide.*] Here he speaks of the second grace which God puts forth towards the faithful, after they are

brought to bear his yoke, and submit themselves obediently to his commands. But this teachableness will nowhere be found as long as the mind, being lifted up with pride, shall be unsubdued. Forasmuch as the Hebrews call poor or afflicted persons, עניים, and that the same word is by a metaphor transferred to the meek and lowly, it seems to me probable that David has comprehended as well the afflictions wherewith the insolence of the flesh is quelled, as also the virtue of mildness itself; as if he had said; After God hath brought them low, he reacheth out his hand gently to them, and leadeth them forth the whole course of their life. Nevertheless, some take *judgment and the way of the Lord* for a righteous and well-ordered method of living. And others refer it to God's providence, which seems more correct and agreeable to the text, because soon after he adds, *all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth;* the sense therefore is, that they who being truly cast down in themselves submit them to God's guidance, shall feel how well he provideth for his children. Therefore judgment and his way are nothing but his governing, whereby he declareth himself to have care of their welfare like a very good father, to rescue the oppressed, to lift up those that are cast down, to cheer and comfort the sorrowful, and to succour those that are in misery. Now we understand in what way God's grace proceedeth towards us; namely, that first he bringeth again into the way the strayers and wanderers, or rather the runaways, bridleth our stubbornness, and boweth those that were before untameable, to the obedience of his righteousness; and secondly, abandoneth not the afflicted and troubled, but after he hath by the cross framed them to humility and mildness, sheweth himself a provident father in ruling their life.

10 *All the ways of the Lord.*] Those interpreters are deceived who think that in this verse the doctrine of the law is termed true and sweet, and that it is felt to be so by those that follow it, as though this place agreed with that saying of Christ's, *My yoke is easy, and my burden light;* Matt. xi. 30. For such interpretation is not only constrained, but also may easily be disproved by many like places, where the ways of the Lord are taken in a passive sense, for the fatherly method which he observes in maintaining and cherishing those that are his; or rather for the whole government wherewith he ruleth the affairs of the world. The effect therefore is, that the Lord dealeth in such wise with the faithful, that they may on all hands feel him favourable and soothfast; for David shews not here in what sort God shews himself indifferently to all mankind, but

what his children find him to be. For we saw in the eighteenth Psalm, that he is hard and rough to the stiff-necked, and we see that though he bear with them never so mercifully, yet are they moved with no feeling of his sweetness, so far are they from looking for full blessedness at his hand by leaning on his promises. Nay rather, as soon as any adversity befall them, they murmur and are offended, and accuse God of cruelty, or else complain that God is deaf to their prayers. Again, in prosperity, they shun his sight. Wherefore not without cause does he assign God's mercy and faithfulness as a special treasure to the faithful; as if he should say, It is not to be feared that God will beguile us, if we abide in his covenant. *Covenant* and *testimony* import one thing, saving that the second is added as an exposition of the first; and it comprehends the whole doctrine of the law, wherein he maketh a covenant with his chosen people.

11 *For thy name's sake, O Lord, &c.*] Because a copulative is inserted, some think that this member is expressed elliptically, so that there should be some word understood; and afterwards they read this sentence apart by itself, *be merciful to my sin.* Therefore, according to their saying, the sense should be, Lord, although I have not kept thy covenant exactly, yet cease not thou, for all that, to shew thyself beneficial to me; and that my sin keep not thy goodness from me, forgive it me. But I agree rather with others, who think the copulative superfluous, as it is in many other places, so that the verse may form one connected sentence. Also the interpreters disagree in the tense of the verb: for some hold still the preter-tense, as though David should yield God thanks for remitting his sin. But the other exposition is truer, which is also more received; namely, that David resorts again to the sanctuary of God's mercy, that he may obtain pardon. For ו has the effect of changing of the time, and the future tense is taken in the sense of wishing. And I join this verse with the things that went before, in this wise: when the prophet had considered with himself that God is liberal and faithful to his servants, he descends into himself, and acknowledges that he cannot be accounted in that number, but by means of forgiveness; and therefore he falls to intercession, as in Ps. xix. 13, after he has treated of the reward that is laid up for the faithful when they shall have kept the law, suddenly he cries, *Who understandeth his own faults?* Therefore, although David be not ignorant how liberally God promiseth whatsoever pertains to a blessed life, to those that keep his covenant; yet, forasmuch as he sees how far

he is yet from the perfect righteousness of the law, he stops not in that trust, but seeks remedy for the manifold offences whereof he is guilty in himself. Thus, that God may repute us his servants, we must always sue to him to bear with our infirmities of his fatherly lovingkindness, because, without free remission of sins, there is no reward of works to be hoped for; nevertheless, that he may the more certainly convey that he depends altogether upon the mere grace of God, he sets down in express words, *for thy name's sake*, meaning thereby, that, as often as God pardoneth his servants, he takes occasion from no other quarter than himself; like as a little before he said in the same sense, *for thy goodness' sake*. Howbeit, he was compelled, by the very greatness of his offence, to call upon the name of God: for soon after follows his confession, that his sin is *great and manifold*, for the word רב may be translated both ways; as if he had said, Truly my sins overload me with a great burden, so that the very greatness or weight of them is such as to cut off all hope of forgiveness from me; but the exceeding great glory of thy name, O Lord, is of more worth than that thou shouldest shake me off.

12 What man is he that feareth the Lord? him will he teach in the way that he may choose.

13 His soul shall dwell at ease, and his seed shall possess the land by inheritance.

14 The secret of the Lord is to them that fear him, that he may make his covenant known unto them.

15 Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord, for he will bring my feet out of the net.

12 *What man is he?*] Again, by musing with himself, what is the character in which God sheweth himself to his servants, he gathers new force. For we have said that nothing is more natural than for earnestness of praying to languish, unless the remembrance of God's promises hold it up. By the way, it is not to be doubted that David partly accuses himself, and partly encourages himself to the fear of God, upon conceiving better hope. For first, by intimating that the reason why men are destitute of right understanding and sound judgment, is because they yield not themselves to God with reverence and fear, to be ruled by him; he imputes it to his own sluggishness that his mind was darkened, and that he has gone out of the way after his own lusts. And contrariwise, he promises himself the Holy Ghost to guide him

in his way, if he yield himself wholly to God, and shew himself willing to learn. Also the interrogation seems to note the fewness of them that fear God; for although all pray without exception, and every man pretend some endeavour after godliness, yet where is there one among so many that searches himself thoroughly? yea rather, almost all men indulge themselves in their own drowsiness. And therefore the fear of God is very rare; whence it comes to pass that the world is for the most part bereft of the spirit of counsel and wisdom. Some interpreters turn the future tense, in the verb *choose*, into the present tense; as if it had been said that God directs men to the way which he liketh, and in which he will have men to walk; but I do not approve of it. For this choice, in my judgment, is rather referred to each man; as if it had been said, So that we are disposed to the fear of God, he will not be wanting on his part, but will guide us with the spirit of wisdom to choose our way. For when we are about to take to some course of living, we stand as it were in a forked way; yea rather, in every one of our doings we hang in doubt and are at our wits end, unless God meet us to shew us the way. David therefore says, that although men know not what is right and what is meet for them to choose; yet, provided we address ourselves with pious teachableness to follow God, he will always be our certain and faithful guide. And forasmuch as this fear of God is not bred in us by nature, it were a folly for any man to reason here, that God remains inactive till men by their own preparation wind themselves into his favour, and that then he should further their right endeavours; for David preached just now of this first grace, that God teacheth the transgressors; and now he adds the second, that he taketh under his government those that are already subdued and softened, so that, guided by the light of the Spirit, they may understand what is needful to be done.

13 *His soul shall dwell.*] If the highest felicity of man be to take in hand nothing, or attempt nothing but by the warrant of God, it is also a most high and incomparable benefit to have him the guide of our life, that we stray not at any time. But by way of an accession here is added an earthly blessing also, wherein the fruit of the former grace appears openly; like as Paul also teaches, 1 Tim. iv. 8, *that unto godliness is promised not only eternal salvation, but also the things that pertain to the present life.* The effect is, that the true worshippers of God are not only blessed spiritually, but also are blessed by him even as appertaining to the state of this present life. True it is that they are not always dealt with according to their hearts'

desire, nor that the conveniences they wish flow always after one certain and even rate; yea rather it happens oftentimes that they are vexed with troubles and miseries, while the ungodly live delicately. But we must know, that as often as God withdraweth his blessing, they are awakened thereby, that they perceive themselves to be yet far off from the perfect fear of God. Notwithstanding, in the mean time, so far as is expedient for them, they so enjoy the benefits of God, that they are happy indeed in comparison of worldly men and despisers of God, because, even in the extreme of poverty, being fully persuaded that God is present with them, they rest in that secure haven of comfort. This is most true certainly, that all our miseries spring out of one well, because we interrupt the course of God's blessing by our own sins; and yet that his grace shineth in this so confused rout in such manner that the state of the saints is the better of the two; because, although they are not glutted with goods, yet do they continually taste of his fatherly favour. And hereunto do I gladly refer the name of *soul;* that is to say, that they are not without a proper sense in receiving God's gifts, so that mean things can do much more to content them, than the greatest abundance can do to satisfy the ungodly. Therefore, according as each man is inwardly contented with his lot, and with cheerfulness seeks after patience and quietness, his soul is said to dwell at ease. Some interpreters draw this word *dwelling* to the time of death, but they rely more on subtilty than truth; for, as it is said, he speaks of the state of the earthly life. Afterwards, to amplify the matter, he adds in the second place, that the posterity of the faithful shall inherit the land; whence it follows, that God pursueth them with his favour. Whereby we gather again that death is no destruction to the servants of God, and that they perish not when they pass out of this world, but remain alive. For it were against reason that God should bereave those of life, for whose sake he doeth good to others. Now how far the heritage of the land comes to the children of the saints, as has been said elsewhere, we shall see more at large; Ps. xxxvii.

14 *The secret of the Lord.*] He confirms in other words what he said just now; namely, that God will become a teacher, and a master to all the godly; and according to his custom he repeats the same thing twice in one verse. For nothing else is *the covenant of God*, than *the secret*, or *purpose of God*. But under the name of *secret*, he commends the excellency of the doctrine which is set forth to us in the law of God. For how much soever worldly men, through

lofty pride despise Moses and the prophets; yet the faithful acknowledge, that in their doctrine the secrets of heaven are opened to them, which far surpass the measure of man's wisdom. Therefore whosoever desires to profit duly in the law, let him reverently regard the doctrine that it contains. And now this place invites us to modesty and lowliness, that in reliance on our own wit, or in confidence of our own cunning, we attempt not to rush into God's mysteries, the knowledge whereof David, Ps. cxi. 10, affirms to be the peculiar gift of God alone. Again, seeing that the fear of God is said to be the entrance to right understanding; how much soever each man covets to increase in faith, so much also let him proceed in the fear of God. Howbeit, where godliness thrives, we need never doubt that we shall lose our labour in seeking God; indeed the covenant of God is a secret too high for man's capacity. But as God's will is not that any man seek him in vain, whosoever they are that labour to serve him with a true zeal, the Holy Ghost shall guide them to the heavenly wisdom which is appointed to their salvation. Here, indirectly, David censures the literal disciples of the law, who falsely and vainly boasted themselves to be partakers of God's covenant. For although God, by his voice, speak indifferently both to the good and bad: yet if there come not a sincere affection, he singeth to the deaf; as Isaiah xxix. 11, says, that to the ungodly the law is like a book that is closed and sealed. Therefore it is no marvel, that the pure worshippers of God, to whom he discloses his secrets, are sorted out from the wicked, or the hypocrites. David, grounding himself upon this hope, comes boldly to God's school, and, bringing others with him, shews plainly that it is an abominable invention in those who keep all the common people from coming to the scripture, as it were from entering into a maze; as though persons out of every order were not by express words called to the knowledge of God's covenant, whosoever they are that fear him from their heart.

15 *Mine eyes are.*] Here David sets forth his own faith, and the perseverance thereof, not for a boast, but that, in confidence of obtaining, he might become more ready to pray. For inasmuch as all they that have respect to God, are promised that their hope shall not be disappointed, nor themselves be put to shame, the saints often fence themselves with this buckler. In the mean time, by his own example he appoints to others the right order of praying; that is to say, that they hold their thoughts fast fixed upon their God. For it is no rare thing for all the affections to be denoted under the name of the *eyes*, as the sense of sight is most keen, and

draws the whole man to it. The reason that is added shews more plainly that hope is joined to longing; as if he had said, that he did not set his mind upon God's help doubtingly and fearfully, but because he was persuaded that he would be his deliverer. And the pronoun *he* carries a great force with it; for it teaches that he gazes not about here and there, after the manner of those that by flitting to and fro invent sundry ways to save themselves; but that he is contented with God alone.

16 Look towards me, have mercy upon me, for I am alone and poor.

17 The sorrows of mine heart are enlarged; draw me out of my troubles.

18 See mine affliction and my travail, and take away all my sins.

19 Behold mine enemies, for they are multiplied; and they hate me with outrageous hatred.

20 Keep my soul, and deliver me; that I be not ashamed; for I have trusted in thee.

21 Let my soundness and uprightness preserve me, for I have trusted in thee.

22 O God, redeem Israel from all his troubles.

16 *Look towards me.*] Because the carnal understanding suggests to us that God hath forgotten us, if he help us not; David follows the order to which nature leads us, desiring God to have regard of him, as if he had neglected him before. And I resolve the words thus: Look towards me to have mercy upon me. For he puts God's looking upon him, as the cause of his welfare, whereto is afterwards added the effect. For as soon as God shall have vouchsafed to regard us, his hand also will be ready to help us. Again; to move God, he sets forth his own misery, terming himself *alone*, that is to say, *desolate*, and afterwards *poor*. And there is no doubt but he alludes to the promises, wherein God declares that he will be ready at hand to help the miserable and comfortless.

17 *The sorrows of mine heart.*] In this verse he confesses not only that he has outward war with his enemies, and with the troubles which they put him to, but also that he is vexed inwardly with sorrow and anguish. And the manner of speech is to be noted, whereby he signifies that the accumulation of his cares is so great, that it fills all the corners of his heart, in the same manner as if mighty waters rushing

on far and wide, should overflow some country. Now when we see David's heart to have been wholly possessed with anguish, there is no cause that we should wonder if temptations now and then cast us down with their violence. But let us with David beseech God to succour us, as it were at the very point of despair.

18 *See mine affliction*] By urging so often these complaints, he shews sufficiently that they were no light miseries wherewith he was tempted: which is to be marked carefully, that when we shall be exercised after the same manner, we may know how to pray: for the Holy Ghost setteth such a mirror before us, that our minds should not sink under the multitude or burden of afflictions. But that he may obtain relief from his miseries, again he craves remission of his sins, calling again to his remembrance what he had touched upon a little before; namely, that he did not look for God's favour, unless he were reconciled by free forgiveness. And surely, they are excessively dull, who, being contented with the outward deliverance, do not search out their inward miseries; but, as much as in them lies, could desire to have them buried in forgetfulness. David, therefore, to find a remedy for his troubles, begins at remission of sins, because, as long as God is angry and displeased, all things must needs issue unhappily to us; but God is always justly displeased with our sins. And this is to be held for a rule; that although the Lord nurture his servants by the cross for diverse ends, yet as often as we are afflicted, we are called to the examination of our consciences, that we should humbly seek reconciliation with God.

19 *Behold mine enemies.*] In this verse he complains of the multitude and barbarity of his enemies; because the more God's servants are oppressed, so much is God the forwarder to help them, and succours them the more mightily, according to the greatness of their danger. *Hatred*, חמס, that is to say, *outrage*, is taken for cruel and bloody hatred. Now, forasmuch as the rage of David's enemies was so great that it could not be appeased but by his death, he calls upon God to preserve his life; whence is gathered that extreme necessity that I spake of. That which follows next, namely, *that he be not ashamed*, admits a double sense. Some keep still the future tense, as though David assured himself that he was already heard, and promised himself the reward of his hope in his wished-for success. But I incline rather to the other, that he should continue his praying. The effect is, that he leans upon God, because his hope of safety which he had conceived should not deceive him. For there is no spur more effectual to earnest affection in praying.

than when we can testify that we trust in him. So much the more, therefore, is God to be requested to increase our hope, if it be small; to awaken it, if it be drowsy; to establish it, if it be wavering; to strengthen it, if it be weak; and to lift it up, if it be fallen.

21 *Let my soundness and uprightness.*] To some it seems a single prayer; as though David should require to be preserved clear from all offence, according as he had behaved himself innocently, and had abstained as well from all deceit as from open wrong. Others make a twofold request of it; that he should desire to have a pure and sound affection of heart given him, lest forsooth, he should break out into revenge, or other unlawful means of saving his life: and so the sense would be; Lord, although the flesh provoke me to seek any manner of remedies, and mine enemies also drive me to it by their importunateness; yet bridle thou my wicked affections within me, that I may hold myself in pure and perfect equity; and that equity and uprightness, as the two best maintainers of my welfare, may suffice me. Nevertheless, I rather embrace the first sense, because he adds soon after a record of his integrity: for whosoever with a quiet and meek spirit waits upon God, will endure anything rather than give himself leave to contend with his enemies in unrighteousness. Therefore, in my judgment, David protests that he has lived so uprightly among men, that his enemies had no cause to assault him. And because he is very well assured of it in himself, he calls upon God to defend his innocence. But as he has confessed in three places already that he is justly chastised, it may seem strange that he boasts now of his uprightness. This question has been solved in another place, where we said, that the saints, in respect of themselves, come always with submission into the sight of God, making suit for forgiveness; and yet that the same is no hindrance to them, from setting forth the goodness of their cause before God. Nevertheless it ought to have been added of necessity, that he says, he trusted in God: for that God may take upon him to defend us, it is not enough to have law and right on our side, unless, leaning on the promises of God we acquiesce under his protection and defence. So it often falls out, that strenuous and wise men have not success answerable to their desire, when they maintain good causes either upon trust of their own wit, or depending upon fortune. Therefore, that God may be the maintainer and defender of our innocence, we must first deal uprightly and innocently with our enemies, and afterward commit our salvation unto God.

22 *O God, redeem Israel.*] In this concluding part, David

shews what kind of enemies they were of whom he complained. For it is probable that they were inward enemies, who were troublesome to God's people, as it were a malady enclosed in their bowels. For by the word *redeem*, we gather that the church was at that time oppressed with hard bondage: and therefore I doubt not but Saul and those that reigned tyrannously with him are noted in this Psalm. Nevertheless, he shews therewith that he seeks not his own safety alone, but comprehends the common state of the whole realm; according as the mutual communion of the saints requires, that each several person should be grieved with the common misfortunes, and with one consent groan before God. And verily, it avails not a little to the confirmation of faith, that David, thinking himself to have nothing peculiar himself which was not shared by the whole body of the faithful, accounted the wrongs which he suffered to belong to all the godly as well as himself. Also this order is to be observed, that when each man bewails his own miseries, he must also therewith extend his anxieties and prayers to the whole church.

PSALM XXVI.

This Psalm is for the most part like the other. For the prophet being oppressed with many wrongs, and finding no succour at all in the world, calls for aid to God; that he will vouchsafe to undertake the cause of a man that was wrongfully afflicted, and maintain his innocence. And because he had to do with hypocrites, he appeals to God's judgment, sharply reproving them for pretending the name of God falsely. In the end, as having compassed his desire, he promises sacrifice of praise for his deliverance.

[*A Psalm of David.*]

1 Judge me, O Lord: because I have walked in my soundness, and trusted in the Lord, I shall not stagger.

2 Prove me, O Lord, and try me; search my reins and my heart.

3 For thy goodness is before mine eyes: therefore have I walked in thy truth.

4 I have not sat with men of vanity, neither will I come in (*company*) with underminers.

Judge me, O Lord.] I said just now, that David flees to God's judgment because he finds no upright dealing in men.

Among the Hebrews, he is said *to judge*, who takes upon him the examination of a cause: therefore it is as if David should call God the maintainer of his right. For when he gives us over for a time to the injuries and frowardness of our enemies, he seems to neglect our cause; but when he restrains our enemies, that they cannot run riot to do mischief at their pleasure, he shews in very deed, that he is concerned to defend our right. Therefore let us learn by the example of David, to resort to the judgment-seat of God, when we are destitute of man's help, and to repose ourselves on his protection. The things that follow, are expounded diversely by the interpreters. Some read it continuously, *Judge me, because I have walked in my soundness.* And others refer it to the latter member, *because I have walked in my soundness, therefore shall I not stagger.* I, indeed, extend it willingly to both. For, inasmuch as it is the proper duty of God to stand up for, and maintain good causes; in making him his defender, he cites him as a witness of his pureness and hope, whereupon he conceives also confidence of obtaining help. Still, if any man like to separate them, it seems most probable that this sentence, *Judge me, O Lord,* should be read by itself, and that afterwards should follow this other prayer, *that God should not suffer him to stagger,* because he has behaved himself innocently and uncorruptly. Howbeit the force of the possessive pronoun *my*, is to be noted, which the interpreters improperly pass over. For he does not simply testify that he has been sound, but that he had proceeded constantly in the right course, and not been put from his purpose, however powerful the engines that had been brought to bear against him. For when wicked men assail us, so that they overwhelm us by their mischievous arts, we know how hard a thing it is to keep the same mind. For herein, as we think, consists the hope of our victory, if we can encounter force with force, and art with art. And it is a temptation that for the most part touches good and stayed men, who otherwise are earnestly inclined to do well, that the importunateness of their enemies compels them to step out of the right way. Therefore, let us learn, by the example of David, to stand steady on our ground, even when occasion is offered us to do harm, and when our enemies force and provoke us by sundry means; and not to suffer ourselves in anywise to be led away from pursuing the course of our integrity.

2 *Prove me.*] The more David saw himself unworthily and undeservedly oppressed with slanders, the more was he kindled by excess of grief, to assert his own righteousness fearlessly. And he not only purges himself of outward sins,

but also makes his boast of the uprightness and pure affection of his heart, and at the same time contrasts himself covertly with his enemies. For inasmuch as they were gross hypocrites, proudly pretending the name of God, he accuses this their shamelessness and hardihood before God. And this protestation declares how well he was assured of himself, when he durst offer all the recesses of his heart to the examination of God's judgment. It is to be observed always, that it was the depravity of his enemies that compelled him to vaunt himself so mightily. For had he not been condemned wrongfully by men, he would with all humbleness have shunned such an examination, for he knew that his zeal to do well, was far as yet from perfection. But when he saw himself falsely charged, the wrongful dealing of men encouraged him to press to God's judgment-seat without hesitation. Howbeit, because he knew that the outward pretence of innocence bears no great sway there, he alleges the pure uprightness of his heart. For though some make this distinction, that *the heart* should signify the higher affections, and *the reins*, the sensual, as they term them, and gross affections; it is more curious than substantial. For we know that the Hebrews by the term *reins*, denote that which is most deeply hidden in men. David therefore having a clear conscience, offers himself wholly to the examination of God, not as careless or rather senseless men do, who, flattering themselves, think they shall pass off a deception upon God with their glozings; for no doubt but he searched himself well and thoroughly, before he pressed so boldly into the sight of God. And this is first and foremost to be looked to; that if we covet to make ourselves approved before God, he that is wrongfully impeached must not only have abstained from doing wrong himself, but also have continued in uprightness of heart.

3 *For thy goodness.*] This verse may be read continuously, and divided into two members, but for the most part without altering the sense. If any man like to form it into one continuous text, both the verbs shall be principal, in this wise; Lord, because thy goodness hath always been before mine eyes, and I have rested in thy protection; I have bridled all wicked lusts in my heart, lest, by the provocation of mine enemies, I might have been impelled to revenge: and so in this verse there would be a rendering of a cause. The other exposition also is allowable, thus; Because I have had thy goodness before mine eyes, I have walked in the truth which thou commandest. But then would the copulative be superfluous, which is a thing very common among the Hebrews. Now although this interpretation be much like

the former, yet had I rather follow that which is less removed from the words. For inasmuch as it is a rare and difficult virtue, not only to withhold oneself from doing evil, when all things provoke one thereto, but also not to deviate from pureness of heart; the prophet declares in what manner he continued his course among such sore temptations: namely, because he set before his eyes the goodness of God, whereby he carefully preserveth his servants, lest by declining to evil practices he might have deprived himself of his help; and because by depending upon his protection he possessed his life in peace, inasmuch as he was thoroughly persuaded that it could not come to pass that God should forsake his faithful servants, that lean unto him. And surely, had he not grounded himself upon God's goodness, he could not have stood firm in observing uprightness, among so many and such severe assaults. And this is a notable difference between the children of God and worldly men: that the former, in hope of better issue at the Lord's hand, depend upon his word, and are not impelled to mischievous devices through unquietness; but the latter, although they undertake good causes, yet because they are ignorant of God's providence, are hurried hither and thither, seek after unlawful shifts, and flee to craftiness, and finally set before them no other purpose than to overcome evil with evil; whence also miserable and sorrowful, yea and now and then even tragical ends; because, setting aside God's grace, they are bent only on craft and wiliness. The effect is; that David was constant in keeping himself righteous, because he had determined that God should be his guide. Now, then, in the first place he made mention of *goodness*, and afterwards he added *truth*, because God's goodness is not known but by his promises; which goodness is able to lead us with unyielding courage of mind through all temptations.

4 *I have not sat.*] Again he protests that he was far different from his enemies. For always the antithesis is to be noted, that depraved men, by all the harm and mischief they wrought against him, could never move him from following that which is good. This verse might also be joined with the former, as a filling up of the sentence; that David, upon trust of God's grace, had withdrawn himself from deceivers. And by the words *of sitting* and *coming in*, here is denoted a partaking of counsel, and fellowship in working; according as is said in the first Psalm: for David denies that he had any thing to do with vain and deceitful men. And surely the best remedy to call us back, and to keep us from accompanying with the wicked, is to fasten our eyes upon God's goodness: for he that walks in the faith of

God, committing the success of all things to his providence, will never meddle with their craftiness. Those whom in the former member he terms *men of vanity*, he calls soon after נעלמים, that is to say, close, and wrapped in wiliness. For hence comes the vanity of dissimulation, that wily persons have another thing laid up in their heart than that which they utter with their tongue. That this word should be derived from עלם is absurd; neither pertains it to the matter that their deceitfulness should be compared to children's play. I confess indeed, that whosoever are given to craftiness are mockers also; but to what purpose serves so constrained an exposition, seeing it is manifest that the source is pointed out whence all lying and deceit proceed? and so faith, which is fully fixed upon God's promises, is judiciously opposed to all crooked and iniquitous devices, in which unbelief engages us whenever we refuse due honour to the protecting power of God. For David, by his own example, teaches that we need not fear in the least that our simplicity will make us a prey to the ungodly, when God promiseth us safety under his hand. The children of God also have a wisdom of their own, but differing far from the wiliness of the flesh. For by the guiding and government of the Holy Ghost, they take precautions against secret snares beforehand, in suchwise, however, that they give a loose rein to no craftiness.

5 I have hated the rabble of the ungracious, and with the wicked will I not sit.

6 I will wash my hands in cleanness, and compass thine altar about, O Lord.

7 That I may make *men* hear the voice of praise, and shew forth all thy wondrous works.

5 *I have hated.*] He repeats again that protestation of his; namely, how sorely he abhors the ungodly. First, he denied that he had any fellowship with them; and now he declares more openly, that he eschewed their company even with loathing; for such is implied in the word *hate*. True it is, that the ungodly are everywhere hated; but how few are there that withdraw themselves from them lest they might follow their manners! David mentions both, as well that he hated their company, as that he communicated not with them in their doings: whereby it appears, he warred not so much with their persons as with their vices. Also he mentions another point of stayedness; namely, that although he shunned the ungodly, yet he forsook not there-

fore the congregation of God for the hatred he bare them, nor withdrew himself from the fellowship commanded by the law of God. Many there be that offend in this behalf, and that not lightly; who, when they see the evil mingled with the good, think themselves stained with their infection, if they immediately withdraw not themselves aside from the whole flock. This overmuch preciseness drove the Donatists in old time, and before them also the Latharists and the Novatians, to pernicious schisms. And in our days the Anabaptists, upon like pride, have separated themselves from the holy congregations, because they saw them not so clean purged from all filthiness as were to be wished. As for the Donatists, they, by standing upon terms, made themselves a laughingstock in a certain disputation. There was a diet held for the appeasing of discords; at which, being desired to sit down for honour's sake by the usher of the convocation house, they said they would stand, because it was not lawful to sit with the ungodly. Then Augustine, with a delicate stroke of wit, rejoined, And why made you not conscience to come in unto us also? for both are written together; *I will not go in unto the wicked, neither will I sit with the ungodly.* David, therefore, wisely tempers his own zeal, so that he separates himself from the ungodly, and yet ceases not to resort to the temple, so far forth as the commandment of God and the order appointed by the law require. Certainly, by his terming it *the rabble of the ungodly*, one may gather that the number of them was not small. Therefore it is to be believed that at that time they flew about as though they only excelled among the people of God, yea, and had been lords over them. Yet did not this prevent David from coming to the sacrifices, according to the custom. Truly, heed is to be taken that the church be not defiled openly with such wickedness; and each man privately ought to endeavour for his own part, that his forbearing and indulging cherish not the maladies of vices. But if at any time there reign not this strictness of discipline, such corruption hinders not any man severally from continuing in the church after a godly and holy manner. By the way, here is to be noted what held David back; namely, the partaking of the sacrifices.

6 *I will wash.*] Here, in the common use of the sacrifices, he separates himself from the wicked who professed the same worship of God, and with great pomp thrust in themselves, as though they had been lords of the temple. Therefore inasmuch as David and the hypocrites were all one in this respect, that they came into the temple and stood about the altar together, to prove himself the true

worshipper of God, he testifies not only that he uses the outward ceremonies, but also that he comes with unfeigned devotion to serve God. For there is no doubt that he alludes to the solemn manner of washing, which was used under the law. But forasmuch as the hypocrites, neglecting the true cleanness, sought their cleanness only in water, their gross superstition is here reproved. For it was the meaning of God, that men being by that ceremony of washing put in mind of their uncleanness, should be provoked to repentance. So little, then, did the outward washing profit of itself, that it kept the hypocrites further off from access to God. And therefore the prophet, by protesting that his washing shall be in pureness, proves that they, by their washing, gather more dirt and filthiness. For the word נקיון signifies the cleanness of anything, and by a metaphor is transferred to innocence. And so we see the vain labour wherewith the hypocrites weary themselves, laughed to scorn when pureness is taken away from their washings. But as for us, how high soever the ungodly are in the church, and though troops of them fill the temples, let us, after the example of David, so follow the outward profession of our faith, as that we pretend not falsely the outward ceremonies instead of the true godliness; and also so that we may be pure and clear from all spot of wickedness. And because it was not lawful for the people to touch the altar, David used the expression *compassing it about*.

7. *That I may make men hear.*] By these words he shews that he refers the sacrifices to their lawful use and end, from which the hypocrites are far off. For they little know, and as little care, for what purpose God ordained the exercises of religion; because they think it sufficient to thrust themselves into God's presence with the pomp or mask of dissimulation. David, therefore, minding to discern the spiritual worship from the mock and counterfeit worship, says that he comes into the temple to set forth the praise of God's name. And there is the figure synecdoche in his words, because there is but one species of worship mentioned. For in the sacrifices, there was commanded not only giving of thanks, but also a fixing of the thoughts on repentance and faith. But as the ultimate end, or at least the chief object of them is, to commend God's goodness upon the knowledge of his benefits, it was not against reason for the rest to be comprehended under this part. So also, Ps. l. 14, the sacrifice of praise alone is set against all outward ceremonies, as though the whole sum of godliness consisted therein. Also in Ps. cxvi. 12, *What recompense shall I make to the Lord for all his gifts? I will receive the*

cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. For the rest, that David may the better illustrate God's undeniable power, and extol his benefits the more gloriously, he uses the terms *wondrous works;* as if he should say, it was not after any common or ordinary manner that God had preserved him.

8 O Lord, I have loved the habitation of thine house; and the place wherein thy glory dwelleth.

9 Gather not my soul with the ungodly; nor my life with the men of blood.

10 For in their hands is maliciousness; and their right hand is full of bribes.

11 But I will walk in my soundness: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.

8 *O Lord, I have loved.*] By this verse he confirms that he comes not into the temple lightly, but with an earnest devotion. For although the ungodly often resort to the holy assemblies, yet do they thereby seek but lurking-places to escape the sight of God. But the godly and pure-hearted resort not to the church for vain ostentation sake: but because they are bent downright to seek God, they willingly and desirously apply to their own use the furtherances which God offereth them there; and this profit engenders a longing and love in their hearts. Now, then, this protestation shews, that although David excelled others in faith, yet was he afraid lest the tyrannical violence of his enemies might deprive him of these ordinary instructions, which God had delivered to his church. For, inasmuch as he saw himself to have need of the common discipline and order, he earnestly contended for holding possession of the temple. Whereby we gather, how wicked is the self-complacency of those, who despise the exercises of godliness as superfluous, which not even David could be without. I confess the case stood otherwise in those days when the law, as yet like a schoolmaster, ruled the old people slavishly in comparison of us. Notwithstanding, our case is one with theirs in this respect, that the weakness of our faith has need of helps. And seeing that God hath appointed us, as well the sacraments as the whole order of the church, to the said purpose, woe be to the pride of them that recklessly pass over the things which we see were so highly esteemed of the holy servants of God. Some derive the word מעון, from *an eye,* and so translate it *fairness* or *beholding,* which translation the old interpreter has fol-

lowed. But because it is almost everywhere taken for a dwelling-place, I had rather retain that which is most simple. And whereas the sanctuary is called God's house, and the place wherein his glory dwells, we know how frequently such expressions are to be met with in the scripture, to witness God's presence: not that God either dwelt in a tent, or that he would have the minds of his servants tied to earthly symbols, but because it was needful that the faithful should be put in mind of God's present operation, lest they might think themselves to seek him in vain, as already has been said in another place. Howbeit, that God's glory may dwell among us, it is needful that the lively image thereof shine forth in his word and sacraments. Whence it follows, that whatsoever places are accounted temples in popedom, are rather filthy brothels of Satan.

9 *Gather not.*] After he has avouched his own innocence, he returns to praying, and calls upon God for defence. Truly, at the first blush it might seem a vain prayer, to desire God that he would not wrap the righteous in destruction with the ungodly. But God of his fatherly indulgence permitteth such free expostulations to his servants, that they may themselves in praying correct their own griefs. For David, in conceiving this request, set God's just judgment before his eyes, that he might rid himself of carefulness and fear; because nothing is more alien from God, than to mingle the good and the reprobate together without difference. For whereas the Hebrew word אסף signifies sometimes to *gather up*, and sometimes *to destroy;* in this place I interpret it *to gather into a heap*, as is wont to come to pass in a confused slaughter. Such an objection was that of Abraham, Gen. xviii. 25, *Far from thee be it, that thou shouldest slay the righteous with the ungodly, and that the righteous and the ungodly should be all in one case.* Let us know then, that these forms of praying are indited by the Holy Ghost, that the faithful might certainly assure themselves, that God, even now also, sitteth in inquisition upon every man's cause, to give rightful judgment at the last. In the second member, instead of wicked men, he puts bloody men, enhancing what he had said. For although many wicked men burst not forth to murder at once, yet in process of time they harden themselves to cruelty. Neither will the devil suffer them to rest, until he throw them headlong into deeds of blood.

10 *For in their hands.*] זמה is, properly, inward wiliness and device; but here it is not improperly applied to the hands, because David purposed to express, that the ungodly, of whom he speaks, did not only imagine deceit

secretly with themselves, but also stoutly practise, with their hands, whatsoever malice they conceived in their hearts. And whereas he says, their *right hands are full of bribes*, one may gather hereby, that they are not the common sort of men that be noted, but the nobles themselves, to whom this kind of corrupting applies. For although the ordinary and base sort of men may be hired for reward, yet we know that bribes are wont to be offered to judges and great men, who have authority; and we know also that at that time the worst men bear sway; and therefore it was no marvel though David complained that right and law were set to sale. And we are admonished by this saying, that it is not possible but they must sell themselves to iniquity, who delight in rewards. And surely it is not for nought that God declares that gifts blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the hearts of the righteous.

11 *But I will walk.*] In this repetition is to be noted a circumstance which better sets forth David's righteousness; that is, that among so many temptations he held on his way steadfastly. He saw many become suddenly rich by gifts; as, at this day, as many as sit at the helm, heap up great abundance of riches in a small time, build sumptuous houses, and extend their lands far and wide. Now in that he could by no enticements be bent to follow their steps, he gave a proof of rare and heroic virtue. Therefore he justly affirms that he had not been led away from his accustomed soundness, although the world accounted them happy; that thence it might appear that he trusted more to God's providence than to evil practices. The reason why he requires to be delivered is, that being oppressed with wrongs, and divers ways tempted, he notwithstanding depended only upon God, hoping for deliverance at his hand; whereby we gather also, that he was straitened with severe distress at that time. Moreover, he draws this deliverance out of God's grace, as out of the proper wellspring thereof, and we have seen the cause added to its effect already.

21 My foot hath stood in uprightness; in the congregations will I bless thee, O Lord.

This verse may be expounded two ways. For some think that in these words David avouches the uprightness which he had used among men. But I think rather that he sets forth God's grace, and at the same time promises thankfulness. By a metaphor, therefore, he says that he was preserved in safety. And forasmuch as he knew it was the hand of God alone that stayed him up upon his feet, therefore he

addresses himself to praise and thanksgiving. And he says not only that he will be mindful of the benefit privately, but also that the public assemblies shall be witnesses of it; because it is useful for example, that every man should extol openly the grace of God which he has felt by experience.

PSALM XXVII.

In this Psalm David repeats the prayers and meditations wherewith he had exercised himself in his great dangers. For the thanksgiving which he mingles, shews that the Psalm was composed after he had been delivered. And it may be that he rehearses together the prayers which had employed his meditations at sundry times. For it is to be seen here, with what invincible greatness of mind the holy man was endued, to overcome the most sore assaults of his enemies. Also herein shines his wonderful godliness, that he neither desired to live for any other intent than to serve God, nor could be bowed from that purpose by any disquietness or anxiety of mind.

[*A Psalm of David.*]

1 The Lord is my light and my welfare, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When the wicked, *even* when mine oppressors and my foes came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.

3 If camps stand in battle array against me, my heart shall not be afraid. If war be raised against me, herein will I trust.

The Lord is my light.] This beginning may, indeed, be taken as if David, having already felt God's mercy, should utter a record of his thankfulness; but I incline rather to the other meaning; namely, that David, seeing that he had to encounter with most grievous temptations, fortifies himself beforehand, and gathers matter for confidence; even as it must needs be that the saints must wrestle earnestly with themselves to drive away or to subdue the doubtings whereunto the flesh is so prone, so that they may cheerfully and without encumbrance make haste unto praying. David, therefore, being tossed with divers storms, at length recovers himself, and utters an expression of triumph over the distresses with which he had been harassed, *that where God's mercy and*

favour are, there is nothing to be feared. To this purpose also tends the accumulation of words, wherein he terms God not only his light, but also his welfare, and the rock, or strength of his life. For his meaning was, to set as it were this threefold shield against sundry terrors, as sufficient to ward them off: and it is well known, that under the name of light, is denoted cheerfulness, and the perfection of a blessed life. To explain his meaning, he adds, that God is the welfare and strength of his life; namely, because he is in safety through God's help, and is preserved from the darkness of death. Surely we shall find that all our fears arise hence, that we set too much store by our life, and acknowledge not God to be the keeper of it. Therefore our minds will never be at rest, until we are fully persuaded that our life is well fenced, because the Lord defendeth it with his hand and his power. And the interrogation shews what great account David makes of God's defence, inasmuch as he vaunts himself boldly against all enemies and such as work him harm. And surely we yield not God his due honour, if we have not such trust in his help, that we dare boast of assured safety. David, therefore, as it were weighing in a pair of scales all the power that is in the world and in hell, accounts it altogether lighter than a feather, because God alone outweighs it far. Then let us learn to esteem God's power of such force to preserve us, that it is able to put all fear to flight: not that the minds of the faithful are always untouched by fear in this infirmity of the flesh; but because, forthwith recovering courage, we look down as it were in scorn upon all dangers from the high tower of our confidence. They that never tasted of God's grace therefore tremble, because they cannot lean upon him whom they oftentimes believe to be sore displeased with them, or at least to be removed far off from them. But when God's promises stand before our eyes, and offer us his favour, our unbelief does him grievous wrong, if we dare not with unshrinking mind set him against all our enemies. Therefore, seeing that God allures us gently to him, and assures us that he will be the maintainer of our welfare, as soon as we shall have embraced his promises, because we believe him to be faithful, it behoves us at the same time highly to exalt his mightiness, that it may ravish our hearts to admiration of him. For we must mark well this comparison, *what are all creatures to God?* Moreover, it behoves us to extend this confidence yet further, so that it may banish all misgivings out of our hearts; as Paul, treating of eternal salvation, cries out boldly, *If God be on our side, who can be against us?* Rom. viii. 31.

2 *When the wicked.*] There is no reason why this sentence

should be translated in the future tense, as some interpreters translate it. Howbeit, although we keep still the preter-tense as the prophet has written it, yet may the sense of it be twofold: that is to say, either that David celebrates the victory which he had gotten by the benefit of God, or else that he reports in what way he heartened himself to hope well, even in the very temptation; namely, by reflecting upon God's former benefits; which latter exposition pleases me the better. In effect it comes to this; that there is no cause why David should hereafter doubt of God's help, which he had felt by experience heretofore, because nothing is more available to the confirmation of faith, than calling to mind those things in which God hath shewn evident proof as well of his favour as of his truth and might. Therefore I join this verse and the next following together. For in the former David bethinks himself of the victories which he had obtained by the favour of God: and thence concludes that with how many hosts soever he is besieged, and whatsoever his enemies practise against him, yet will he stand without fear. קרוב, signifies *to approach*, but here it is referred to that breach that David's enemies made when they assaulted him: others translate it *to fight*, but it wants force. And he calls them wicked or froward, to witness his own innocence. And in reporting that they pressed upon him to devour his flesh, he expresses their outrageous cruelty.

3 *If camps stand in battle array against me.*] As I have said, he infers, from his own experience, that whatsoever adversity betide him, yet must he hope well, and not doubt of God's power, now thoroughly seen by experience. He had testified as much in the first verse; but now, upon further proof, he repeats it. Under the name of *camps*, and *armies*, or *hosts*, the prophet comprehends whatsoever is dreadful in the world; as if he should say, Although all the men in the world should conspire his destruction, he would despise their power, because the might of God, which he knew to be on his side, was far above theirs. Moreover, in avouching that he will be without fear of them, he does not quite exempt himself from fear, for that had been insensibility, rather than virtue: but he sets the shield of faith before him, lest his heart should faint at the terrors that encountered him. Some transfer the word *herein* to the verse following; that he should trust to dwell in the house of God. But it rather depends on the doctrine that went before: for then does faith bring forth her fruit in due season, when we stand firm and fearless in the midst of dangers. David, therefore, means that his faith shall be invincible when it comes to the trial, because it leans on the defence of God.

4 One thing have I desired of the Lord, and the same will I still sue for, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to visit his temple.

5 For he shall hide me in his tent in the day of trouble; he shall hide me in the secret place of his pavilion: he shall set me aloft upon a rock.

6 And now shall he lift up mine head above mine enemies that besiege me: and I will offer sacrifices of joy in his pavilion; I will sing, and praise the Lord.

4 *One thing have I desired.*] Some make of this a prophecy concerning the enduring state of the kingdom, wherein consisted not only the private welfare of David alone, but also the welfare of the whole people: as if he should say, he was so well content with so singular a record of God's favour, that he thought on nothing else night and day. It seems a simpler sense to me, however, that whereas he was banished from his country, despoiled of his wife, bereft of his kinsfolk, and finally, dispossessed of all his goods, yet was he not disquieted so much for the want of all these things, as he was grieved and tormented at the heart that he was an outlaw from the sanctuary of God, and wanted the use of God's ceremonies. Therefore in the word *one* there lurks an implied antithesis, inasmuch as David, making no account of all other goods, was bent wholly on God's service; so that it was bitterer to him to be kept from coming to the sanctuary than to be kept from coming into his own house. These things therefore, namely, that David's only wish was to dwell in the temple of the Lord, must be read all in one sentence. For there is no likelihood that there should be some dark request betokened which he suppresses, since he cries out openly with what care he was most distressed. Again he joins steadfastness of purpose, that he will not cease to repeat these prayers. For we see many that in the onset shew great impetuosity, whose heat, by process of time, not only cools but is also quenched. Therefore, by affirming in this wish that he will persevere all his life long, he puts a difference between himself and the hypocrites. Nevertheless, we must consider what reason stimulated David so greatly: surely, he might have called upon God out of the temple; yea, whithersoever he had fled in his banishment, he carried with him the singular promise of God, so that he needed not to have cared for the

sight of the outward building. Also he seems to conceive some gross idea of God, as though he would bind him to timber and stones. But if we weigh his words advisedly, it will be easy to gather that he aimed at another thing than the beholding of the excellent building and furniture of the temple, were it never so costly. Indeed he speaks of the beautifulness of the temple, but he places that beautifulness not in the godliness that was to be seen with the eye, but which had been set forth to Moses in the pattern; as it is written, Exod. xxv. 40, *Look thou make all things according to the pattern that was shewed thee in the mountain.* Therefore, as the fashion of the temple was not formed by the device of man, but was an image of spiritual things, the prophet directed his eyes and all his senses to that end. So much the more detestable, then, is the madness of them that wrest this place to pictures and images, which deserve so little to be numbered among ornaments of churches, that they are rather dung and dirt which defile all the pureness of holy things. Now we must see whether the faithful ought to be disposed in like manner under Christ. Although I confess we differ far from the fathers, yet so far as God holdeth his servants under some outward order, and bringeth them to him by earthly instructions, churches have their beauty still, which ought justly to draw the affections and desires of the faithful to them. For the word, the sacraments, the common prayers, and other helps of the same sort, cannot be cast aside without wicked contempt of God, who presenteth himself to us there, as it were in a glass, or by a reflection.

5 *For he shall hide me.*] Here he warrants himself that his praying shall not be in vain. For although for a while he want the visible sanctuary, yet he doubts not but that, wheresoever he is, he shall be shielded by the hand of God. And he alludes to the temple, which was to the faithful a symbol of God's presence: as if he should say, that in making the request which he spake of, he had not lost his labour, because whosoever shall seek God truly and with a pure heart, shall lie safe under the wings of his defence. So shews he that the figure of the temple was not vain, because God did there after a manner spread out his wings, to gather together the faithful under his protection. Whence he concludes, that forasmuch as he wishes nothing more heartily than to shroud him under these wings, God's protection shall be a ready sanctuary for him in the time of adversity, which, by the similitude of a rock, he declares to be impregnable. For, in old time, towers were wont to be built, for strength's sake, upon high places. Now although he is

at this time beset on all sides with enemies, yet he boasts that he shall get the upper hand. It is an ordinary manner of speech in the scriptures, to say that such as are oppressed with sorrow walk crookedly, and with their heads hanging down; and contrariwise, that men lift up their heads when cheerfulness is restored to them. So in Psalm iii. 4, David said, *Thou, Lord, liftest up my head.* But because, in this place, besieging is set on the other side, he meant to express, that in that retreat of God he should be set aloft, so that he might without fear look down upon the darts of his enemies, wherewith he might else have been stricken through. And in that, being brought to such distress as threatened present death, he trusted to become conqueror, he gives a notable proof of his faith: whereby we are taught, not to measure God's help by outward appearance, or by the outward means, but even in the midst of death to hope for deliverance at his invincible hand.

6 *And I will offer sacrifices.*] By making a vow of thanksgiving after he shall be delivered out of danger, he confirms himself again in the hope of his deliverance. We know that under the law, the faithful, by a solemn custom, paid their vows when they had received any memorable benefit at God's hand. Here, therefore, when David, in his banishment, was kept from coming to the temple, he boasts that he shall come again to his altar to offer the sacrifice of praise to God. Nevertheless, he seems covertly to set the holy rejoicing, and the songs in which he promises to yield thanks unto God, against the heathenish triumphs of the world.

7 Hearken unto my voice: O Lord, how I cry: have mercy upon me and answer me.

8 My heart hath said unto me, Seek ye my face: O Lord, I will seek thy face.

9 Hide not thy face from me, cast not off thy servant in thy displeasure: thou hast been my strength; forsake me not, neither give me over, O God of my welfare.

7 *Hearken unto my voice.*] Again he returns to his prayers. And he reports with what armour he was furnished to force his way out of temptations. By the word *cry*, he expresses vehemence, as I have said elsewhere, that he may incline God the sooner to help him. To the same end also, he makes mention of his own misery a little after; because, the more the faithful are oppressed, so much the more does the very necessity win God's favour.

8 *My heart hath said.*] The changing of the person in the verbs has caused the interpreters to expound this place diversely. But whosoever weighs David's mind closely, will perceive that the passage reads perfectly well. For as it becomes not us to rush hastily before God, unless he call us first, in the beginning David declares that he bethought himself how gently and sweetly God prevents his servants, in that he, of his own accord, encourages them to seek his face. And then, recovering his cheerfulness, he declares that he will come whithersoever God call him. In the word לך there may be a double sense: it imports as much among the Hebrews as *tibi* among the Latins; that is to say, in English, *to thee*. But because the servile ל is often taken for *of* or *concerning*, it were not amiss to translate it, *My heart hath said of thee;* to which exposition most interpreters incline. Notwithstanding, to speak as I think, I rather suppose that here is denoted a mutual talk between God and the prophet. I said just now it was impossible that any man should rise up by faith to seek God, until the way be made open for him by his calling: as also I have shewn elsewhere by the record of the prophet, *I will say unto them, Thou art my people; and they shall say again unto me, Thou art our God;* Zech. xiii. 9. Now, therefore, David says that with this key the gate was opened him to seek God, because he brought forth this promise as it were answering the note of God. And surely, if this concord go not before, no man shall sing the song of invocation aright. Therefore, as soon as we hear God offering himself to us, let us with a ready heart answer, *Amen;* and let us consider his promises with ourselves, none otherwise than as if we had familiar talk with him. And so the faithful shall not need to seek curious conveyances and long fetches whereby to wind themselves into God's favour, seeing that this preface makes them an easy way; namely, how unworthy soever we are to be received of thee, O Lord, yet thy commandment, whereby thou willest us to come unto thee, giveth us courage enough. The voice of God, therefore, must resound in our hearts, as it were an echo in hollow places, that out of mutual harmony there may spring up confidence to call upon God. They commonly take *face* for help; as if it had been said, Seek me. But I doubt not that David, alluding here also to the sanctuary, understands the manner of the manifestation whereby God made himself visible in old time. For although it be not lawful to imagine any gross or fleshly idea of God, yet as it was God's will that the ark of the covenant should be a pledge of his presence, it is not without reason called everywhere his face. True

it is, that we wander from God as long as we live in this world, because faith is removed from sight: but as true is it also that we see God as it were in a glass, or in a mystery, until he shew himself openly to us at the last day. Wherefore, I doubt not that under this word *face* are betokened the helps whereby God lifteth us up to him, by descending from his incomprehensible glory to us, and by setting forth to us an image of his heavenly glory upon earth. Howbeit, as it is at God's sole pleasure how and in what manner he will be seen of us, which he does in his word and sacraments, it is fitting our eyes should be fastened upon this sight, lest it befall us as it has the papists, who with their deceiving forgeries wickedly transform God, while they feign for him, at their lust, what shapes soever they have devised in their own brain.

9 *Hide not thy face.*] He continues, with beautiful effect, the same form of speech, though varying the sense. For the face of God is put here for the sensible working of his grace and favour; as though it had been said, Lord, make me to find in very deed, that thou art near unto me, and let me openly behold thy power in saving me. For we must observe the allusion from the word of God to the experimental knowledge of his grace: for to the intent God may shew himself present in actual deed, as they commonly term it, he must first be sought for in his word. That which follows, *Cast not away thy servant in thine anger*, some Hebrew interpreters expound a little more forcedly, thus: Suffer not thy servant to be busied in the evil cares of this world, which are nothing else but anger and madness. But I gladly take the word נטה for *to shun*, or *to remove*, as many others translate it also. For their opinion is more probable, who say, *Make not thy servant to decline unto anger:* for it cannot be but that when a man is forsaken of God even to the uttermost, he must rage violently, and cast himself down headlong, in the heat of displeasure. If any man think that David now meets this temptation, I will not stand against him: for there was good cause that he should be afraid of impatience, which weakens us and throws us down from our standing. Nevertheless, I hold to the first exposition, which is confirmed also by the two words following; and so in the term *anger* there shall be an implied confession of sin. For although David acknowledge that God might justly cast him down, yet he deprecates his wrath. Furthermore, by calling his former benefits to remembrance, he heartens himself to hope for success, and by this means induces God to continue his help, that he should not leave his own work incomplete.

10 When my father and my mother shall have forsaken me, the Lord will take me up.

11 Lord, teach me thy way, and lead me in the right path, because of mine adversaries.

12 Give me not up to the desire of mine oppressors, for false witnesses are risen up against me, and one that bringeth forth violence.

10 *When my father, &c.*] Forasmuch as it appears by the sacred stories that Jesse performed his duty to the full towards his son David, so far as his ability admitted; some are of opinion, that in this place are denoted the noblemen and councillors allegorically, which is by no means appropriate. And truly it is to no purpose, that they stand upon this doubt; for David complains not here that he was unnaturally betrayed by his father and mother, but by this comparison he enhances the grace of God, that he shall find it always ready at hand, although it should happen to him to be abandoned of all human help. For although the particle כי imports commonly a cause, yet it is known to be often put for *when*, an adverb of time. David therefore meant to express, that whatsoever good-will, love, zeal, care, or duty is to be found among men, the same is far inferior to his fatherly mercy, wherewith he embraceth those that are his. Surely the highest degree of love among men resides in fathers and mothers, who, through tender affection, love their children no less than their own bowels. But God lifteth us up higher, declaring by the prophet Isaiah, that though the mother forget the child of her own body, yet will he be always mindful of us; Is. xlix. 15. In the same degree does David place God; namely, that he, who is the fountain of all goodness, far surmounteth all mortal men, who are by nature niggardly and close. It is a defective manner of speaking, like this of Isaiah, lxiii. 16, *Abraham hath not known us, neither is Israel acquainted with us, yet art thou our father.* The whole comes to this; that although earthly parents be forward in helping their children, yea, and take very earnest care to cherish them and bring them up, yet, if all loving-kindness were utterly quenched in the world, God would supply the offices both of father and mother, towards those that are his. Whereupon it follows, that we underrate God's grace, if our faith surpass not all the senses of our flesh; for it shall happen that the order of nature shall a hundred times be reversed, rather than God will fail his servants.

11 *Teach me thy way.*] Many think that David here

requests of God to be governed by his Spirit, that he may not contend with his enemies in doing impiously and wickedly; which doctrine is very profitable, but it seems not to suit the present place. In my judgment it is more simple, that David desires to have God's hand stretched out to him, and to be safely conducted to a happy end, whereby he may escape the snares and force of his enemies; for he contrasts the directness of his way with difficulties, impediments, rubs, and precipices, which he would not be able to overcome if God took not upon him the charge of a guide to lead him. But whosoever shall desire to commit himself so to God, must first needs abstain from craftiness and evil practices; for he may not hope that God will prosper wicked devices, since he promiseth not any wished success, but to the simple and to such as yield themselves unto his tuition.

12 *Give me not up to, &c.*] The word נפש, that is to say, *of the lust,* or *of the desire,* imports as much as if he had said, Leave me not to the pleasure or lust of mine enemies; and so he gives us to understand, that they gape greedily for his destruction. For God delivereth his people by two ways; that is to say, either by appeasing the cruelty of the ungodly, so that they become meek; or else, when he suffereth them to burn with fury, by restraining their hands and their violence, so that they covet and strive to do mischief, and cannot. Afterwards he adds, that he is assaulted as well by slanders and false accusations, as by open violence; for he says that they *bring forth violence,* who brag of nothing but force of arms and slaughter. And so we see that the holy man was miserably oppressed on all sides; for his integrity, which we know to have been singular, could not exempt him from venomous slanders; and besides that, on the other side he was borne down with main force and might. Wherefore, if the ungodly at any time not only rise up against us with menaces and cruel violence, but also defame us with lying, that they may seem to have good cause to be offended with us, let us call to mind the example of David, who was assaulted both ways. Yea, rather let us bethink ourselves, how Christ, the son of God, suffered no less injury by lying tongues than by swords. But this prayer was delivered to us, that God might assert our innocence, and set the shield of his protection against the cruelty of our enemies.

13 Unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

14 Tarry thou the Lord's leisure, be of good cheer, and he shall comfort thy heart; and tarry thou the Lord's leisure.

13 *Unless I had believed.*] It is sufficiently agreed upon among the interpreters that it is a defective form of speech. Nevertheless, some suppose that the word לולא is employed for the purpose of affirmation, as if it were a manner of swearing, as it is a common custom among the Hebrews to swear in an elliptic form. For in the broken structure of the words, they understand a curse or the punishment of perjury. Notwithstanding, the major part are of a different opinion, that David should say he was held up only by faith, because he had otherwise perished a hundred times. This, therefore, is the sense that they elicit: If I had not leaned upon the promise of God, and thereby persuaded myself for a certainty, that I should be preserved in safety, and had stood steady in the same faith, I had been utterly undone, neither appeared there any remedy. Some refer *the land of the living* to the heritage of heaven; but it is constrained, and also it disagrees with the custom of the scripture. For when Hezekiah, in his song, Is. xxxviii. 11, complains that hope was taken from him of seeing God any more in the land of the living, doubtless he signifies this present life; for by and by there follows, *I shall no more look upon man with the inhabiters of the world.* And we shall meet with a similar manner of speaking in another place. David then believed that he should still enjoy the goodness of God in this world. And because, being bereft of all taste of his grace for a time, he could spy no spark of light; therefore, even out of the darkness of death he promised himself the sight of God's grace, and by this faith sustained his life, although, as to the understanding of the flesh, it was forlorn and past recovery. Notwithstanding, it is to be noted, that David rushed not rashly beyond that which God had promised; for although godliness have promises, not only of the life to come, but also of the life present, yet durst not David to have made this assumption, except he had been warranted by some special answer from God; and certainly he was promised a successor that should sit upon his throne for ever. Justly, therefore, did he hope he should never die till this thing were accomplished. Wherefore, lest any man, by perverse following of his example, might overleap the bounds of faith, it is good to understand what he had proper to himself, and separate from

us. Notwithstanding, in general it behoves us all to hope, that although God deliver us not openly, nor put forth his favour to us in a visible manner, yet he will be always merciful to us even in this life.

14 *Tarry the Lord's leisure.*] It may be doubted whether David turn his discourse from himself to others, and by his own example exhort them to manliness and constancy of patience; as in the end of Ps, xxxi. 19. after he has spoken of himself severally, he makes a transition to all the godly. But as he speaks here in the singular number, and adds not any mark whereby a man may gather that he directs his discourse to others, to me it seems probable that he quickens himself to trustfulness, lest his heart should at any time faint. For inasmuch as he was privy to his own weakness, and knew that his safety was laid up under the custody of faith, in very good season strengthens he himself against the time to come. Moreover, by *tarrying God's leisure*, he puts himself in mind of new encounters, and sets before his eyes the cross that he must bear. For we are then said to *tarry God's leisure*, when, withdrawing his grace, he suffereth us to languish in miseries. David, therefore, being rid of one encounter, frames himself to undertake others afresh. Now as nothing is more hard than to yield God so much honour as to depend upon him when he hideth himself far from us, or delayeth his help, therefore does David stir up himself to gather strength, as if he should say; If fearfulness be crept upon thee, if temptation have shaken thy faith, if the fleshly understanding waver, shrink not, but rather press on with unwearied courage of mind. Nevertheless, we may learn hereby, that God's children are not constant in wilfulness, but in patience, when they commit their souls quietly to God; as Isaiah says, xxx. 15, *In hope and stillness shall be your strength.* Now because David was not of sufficient ability for so great attempts, he purchases himself strength at God's hand by prayer. If he had said no more than *play the man*, he might have seemed to allege the motions of his own free will; but inasmuch as he immediately afterwards adds in the way of correction, *that God will be ready at hand to give him strength*, he shews evidently enough, that when the saints strive stoutly, they fight in another's power. For David does not put his own endeavour into the van, as the papists surmise, and afterwards call for God's aid in the rear: but when he has exhorted himself to his own duty, because he acknowledges himself destitute of strength, he seeks remedy for his default in the grace of God's Spirit. And because he knew he must continue in war all his life long, and new

encounters would rise up from time to time, and that the troubles of the saints are often protracted for a long season, he repeats what he had said concerning the tarrying of God's leisure.

PSALM XXVIII.

After David had been delivered out of exceeding great dangers by the help of the Lord; first, according to his custom, he puts in writing the prayers which he had made in his distress, and afterwards his own rejoicing and praising of God, that he might by his example cause others to do the same. And it is probable that he treats here of Saul's persecutions.

[*A Psalm of David.*]

1 Unto thee, O Lord, will I cry; O my strength, hold not thy peace at me: if peradventure thou answer me not, then shall I be likened to them that go down into the grave.

2 Hear the voice of my prayers when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands to the sanctuary of thy holiness.

1 *Unto thee, O Lord.*] He makes protestation that he has recourse to the help of God alone, that he may bear witness as well of his faith as of his good conscience. For although men be on all hands distressed with many miseries, yet scarce the hundredth person resorts to God, but the greater part either chafe stubbornly upon the bit, or scatter unavailing shrieks into the air, or else, being overcome with despair, yield unto misery, because all of them almost have guilty consciences, and never have tasted how available God's grace is, that they might have an eye to it. In calling God his strength, he confirms better, not only that he was fully persuaded of God's help when he lived at ease and in quietness, but also that he fosters the same faith still, even in his extreme temptations. Afterwards, in comparing himself to the dead, he declares with how great necessity he was pinched; howbeit, he meant not only to express the greatness of the danger, but also protested, at the same time, that when he wants succour he gazes not here and there about him, but depends in suchwise upon God alone that he leaves himself no remaining hope without his grace. For it is as if he had said, I am nobody if thou depart from me; if thou alone succour me not, I am

undone. For it were not enough for him that is miserably afflicted to perceive his own miseries, unless also, convinced of his own helplessness, and distrusting the helps of the world, he should gather himself to God alone. And as the scripture says, that God answereth the faithful when he sheweth by the deed that he regardeth their requests, so against his sensible and present help, here is set *the holding of his peace*, when he shews as though he heard not their prayers.

2 Hear the voice, &c.] This repetition is a token of anguish. Also his ardour and earnestness in praying is gathered by the terms *voice* and *crying*. For they teach that being stricken with care and fear, he prayed not coldly, but burned with vehement desire, as those that by compulsion of sorrow fall to shrieking and crying out. In the second member, by the figure synecdoche, the thing itself is denoted by the sign of the thing. It has been a common ceremony in all ages, for men to lift up their hands in praying. And nature has wrung this gesture even from the heathen and from idolaters, that they should by a visible sign direct their senses to the one God. True it is, that the greater part, when they lightly use this ceremony, busy themselves to no effect in their own forgeries. Nevertheless, the very lifting up of the hands, where hypocrisy and falsehood are away, is an accompaniment of godly and true praying. Yet does not David say here, that he lifts up his hands to heavenward, but to the sanctuary; verily, that being furthered by the help thereof, he might climb the easier even into heaven. For he was not so gross, or so superstitiously tied to the outward sanctuary, but that he knew that God was to be sought spiritually, and that men do then come to him, when, leaving the world, they pierce to the heavenly glory by faith. For inasmuch as the sanctuary was the pledge of God's covenant, David beheld the presence of the promised grace in the same, as it had been in a glass. Even as now the faithful, that they may assure themselves that God is near them, ought to aim right at Christ, who is come down to us clad in the homely weed of flesh, that he may carry us up to the father. Let us understand then, that David laid hold none otherwise upon the sanctuary, than that by the stay of God's promise he might mount over the elements of the world, in which, nevertheless, he exercised himself according to the appointment of the law. דביר was the inner room of the tabernacle, or the chancel wherein the ark of the covenant was set; and it was so called from the answers or oracles which God gave

from thence, to witness to the people the presence of his grace.

3 Draw me not with the ungodly and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbours, whereas there is malice in their hearts.

4 Reward them according to their doings, and according to the maliciousness of their wicked deeds: according to the work of their hands give thou unto them; pay thou them their hire.

5 Because they have not an eye to the works of the Lord, and to the doings of his hands, let him break them down, and not build them up.

3 *Draw me not.*] The whole of it is, that God should not, when there is a difference in their cases, destroy the righteous with the wicked. And no doubt but that in pointing out his enemies, he tacitly affirms his own innocence. And yet he prayed not after this manner, as though he thought that God without any choice was enraged at men without good cause; but rather he reasons upon the nature of God, that he ought to hope well, because it is his property to discern the godly from the reprobate, and to render to each his just reward. By *workers of iniquity*, he understands men wholly given to wickedness. For although the children of God do now and then slip, or stray, or by any means offend; yet their faults delight them not, but rather the fear of God provoketh them to amendment of life. Afterwards he defines and amplifies their maliciousness; that they treacherously compass good men under pretence of friendship, and talk one thing with their tongue, and bear another thing hidden in their heart. More tolerable is open depravity than this foxy wiliness, which by fair means winds itself in, to work mischief. And by this sentence we are warned that those are most detestable before God that assail the simple and unguarded with their glozings, as it were with poison.

4 *Reward them.*] After he has requested God to regard his innocence, he thunders with a curse against his enemies. And the accumulation of terms shews that he had groaned much and long time under the burden before he broke out to desire this vengeance. For he intimates that they had offended not once only, nor a little while, nor in one kind; but that they had proceeded so far in their continual misdoings, that their boldness was utterly intolerable. We know how troublesome and grievous a temptation it is, to

see the ungodly run riot without measure or end, as though God winked at their frowardness. David, therefore, being as it were tired with continual forbearing, and fainting under the burden, desires God at length to restrain the wantonness of his enemies, who of late ceased not to heap mischief upon mischief. So we see that in this verse there is nothing superfluous, where he joins *the maliciousness of their wicked deeds, and the works of their hands, to their doings,* and requires, three times, that they may be rewarded according to their desert. Besides this, with the same effort he testifies his own faith, which kind of boasting the hypocrites do often compel God's children to make, while they elude the judgments of the world with their cavils. For we see how every man remarkable for depravity, being not content to escape scotfree himself, turns informer against the guiltless, and, as it is said in the proverb, the wolf accuses the lamb for troubling the water. This extremity, therefore, compelled David to call upon God for defence. Here again rises a doubtful question concerning desire of revenge, which, notwithstanding, I will unfold in few words, because it has been handled in another place. And first, it is a certainty, that if the flesh stir us to revenge, affection is wrong in the sight of God. For besides that God forbiddeth each of us to wish evil to our enemies in respect of private injuries; it is not possible, but that all the affections which spring from hatred, must be disordered. There is no reason, therefore, that David's example should be pretended by those who are led by their own ill temper to desire vengeance. For the holy prophet burns not here at his private grief, so that he should curse his enemies to destruction; but, laying aside the affection of the flesh, he judges of the matter itself. Therefore, that a man may pray for evil to the wicked, he must before all things discharge himself of all intemperate feeling. Afterwards also, we must be well advised, that the displeasure which we conceive against the evils that offend us, drive us not to inconsiderate zeal; which happened even to the disciples of Christ, when they desired to have those consumed with fire from heaven who denied lodging to their master, Luke ix. 54; and this they pretended to do by the example of Elias; but Christ, rebuking them sharply, saith, *they know not with what spirit they are led.* First, we must take this for a general rule, that we have a desire and care for the welfare of all mankind. So will it come to pass that we shall not only give place to God's mercy, but also wish those to be brought again to their right senses, who seem to rush with wilful minds to their own destruction. To be short; David, being free and

void of all perverse headiness, and being also endued with the spirit of discretion and wisdom, pleads not here so much his own cause as God's. And by this manner of praying, he has put himself and other faithful people in mind, that although the ungodly run riot without control for a while, yet at length they shall come to the heavenly judgment-seat.

5 *Because they have not an eye.*] In this verse he discovers the root of ungodliness; saying, that the reason why the wicked are so emboldened to do mischief, is that they think not they have to deal with God, when they are at enmity with men, and withhold themselves from no kind of misdoing. For although their own conscience prick them, yet they sooth themselves with flatteries, and at length, through stubbornness, harden themselves to insensibility. And first, being besotted with prosperity, they surmise God to be their friend, and that he regardeth not the good men, who are oppressed with many miseries; and finally, that the world runs upon the wheel of fortune; and so they are wilfully blind in broad daylight. So the adversaries of David, because they were wilfully ignorant that he was created king by God, took heart to persecute him. Wherefore he complains of this their gross ignorance, as Isaiah, v. 20, upbraids all the ungodly in general with the same. Moreover, this doctrine contains a twofold use: for it is no mean comfort to the children of God, to be thoroughly persuaded in themselves that when they are wrongfully vexed, they are being inured to patience by God's providence for their own benefit; and that when things are troubled and confused in the world, God sitteth nevertheless as governor in heaven. Again; it is a most fit bridle to subdue the headiness of our flesh, that we fight not in the dark, like the Andabatæ, as though God had no eye to men's affairs. Wherefore, let us learn to consider advisedly whatsoever judgments God putteth in execution, which are so many examples of his justice in ruling mankind. Also, if all things happen to be mingled confusedly together, it behoves us to lift up our eyes to heaven, to consider God's secret judgments. But inasmuch as God never ceaseth to put forth some signs of his providence, even in the greatest darkness, it is inexcusable dulness not to give heed to them; which misconduct the prophet aggravates by repeating again the *works of God's hands.* For he gives us to understand that the ungodly, by going on carelessly, tread under foot whatsoever of God's works they meet with that may bridle their furiousness. *Let him break them down, and not build them up.* Some will that that which went before in this verse

should be instead of a substantive; as if he had said, This brutal furiousness of theirs shall destroy them. But rather by the word *him*, here is to be understood *God;* and so the text will flow very well. Notwithstanding, as they are verbs of the future tense, the sentence may be expounded thus; that David assures himself that the destruction which he had wished lately to the reprobates, shall light upon them. Neither reject I this sense; though, in my judgment, he continues still his petitions. And he desires that the ungodly may be so destroyed, as that they may never lift up their heads again, or recover their former state. For that is the meaning of this figurative speech of the Hebrews, *Let him break them down, and not build them up;* as he speaks of Edom in Malachi, i. 4. Now lest we be stricken with an incurable plague, let us learn to awaken our senses to consider God's works, which may instruct us in his fear, hold us still in patience, and establish us in godliness.

6 Blessed be the Lord, for he hath heard the voice of my petitions.

7 The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart hath trusted in him, and I have been helped; therefore shall my heart rejoice, and with my song will I magnify him.

8 The Lord is their strength; and he is the strength of the safeties of his anointed.

6 *Blessed be the Lord.*] This is the second part of the Psalm; in which the prophet begins to render thanks to God. For hitherto we have seen in what manner he has occupied himself with praying while he was in danger; and now in this thanksgiving he shews that his prayers were not in vain; and so by his own example he confirms it that God is ready to help his servants as often as he is sought in truth and sincerity. The same sentence he declares more at large in the next verse, calling God his strength and his shield: for hence was he persuaded that God had heard him, because he had been preserved by miracle. He adds, that he had been helped in respect of his own trust or hope; for it often comes to pass that they who call upon God do nevertheless disappoint themselves of his grace through their own unbelief. The third time, he says that he will add mirth as a token of his thankfulness. For, although the ungodly and the hypocrites flee to God when they are pinched with distress, yet as soon as they are escaped, forgetting their deliverance, they rejoice, but with a frantic

mirth. The effect of the whole, therefore, is, that David hoped not in vain, because he found by experience that God is furnished with present power to preserve those that are is; and that the ground of his true and substantial joy was, that he felt God favourable to him: whereupon, also, he promises to become mindful and thankful for it. And surely God doth therefore shed cheerfulness into our hearts, that it should open our mouths to sing his praises.

8 *The Lord is their strength.*] In the way of exposition he repeats that which he had said; namely, that God had been his strength, verily because he had blessed his armies. For David had used the hand and help of men, and yet he ascribes the victory to God alone. For inasmuch as he knew that whatsoever help he had received by men, proceeded from God, and that his prosperous success flowed from his free favour, he beheld his hand even in those means as if it had stretched itself palpably out of heaven. And surely it is passing shameful that worldly means, which are nothing else than the instruments of God's power, should darken his glory; and yet there is no fault more common than this. And it is of great force that, in speaking of his soldiers, he uses but the pronoun *their*, as though he pointed to them with his finger. The latter member is a rendering of the cause. For he affirms himself and all his host to have been armed with victorious valour from heaven, because he warred under the standard of God. For such is meant by the name *anointed*; for had not God created him king, and embraced him with his free adoption, he would have favoured him no more than he did Saul. And by this means, in extolling the only power of God whereby he was advanced to the kingdom, he attributes nothing to his own policy and power. By the way, we may learn that as each man is assured in his conscience that his calling is lawful, so is he heartened by this doctrine to hope well. Howbeit, it is to be especially considered, according as we have touched in another place, that the fountain from whence all the benefits that God bestoweth upon us flow, is this, that he hath chosen us freely in Christ. And he puts *safeties* in the plural number, because he had been preserved more than once, and by more ways than one. The meaning therefore is, that since the time that God had anointed David by the hand of Samuel, he never left helping him, but delivered him innumerable ways, until he had accomplished the work of his grace in him.

9 Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance; feed them, and lift them up for ever.

This clause shews that he was not so careful for his own welfare, as for the welfare of the whole church; or rather that he lived not nor reigned privately for himself, but for the common weal of the whole realm. For he bare well in mind, that he was chosen king to none other end. And therein he shewed himself to represent Christ the Son of God, whom, when Zechariah, ix. 9, foreshews should be preserved, without doubt he promises him nothing distinct from his members, but that the effect of his being preserved should diffuse itself over his whole body. By the way, he prescribes a law to earthly kings by his own example, that they should be so addicted to the public good, that they should not desire safety but for their subjects' sakes. But how far they are from this in effect, it profits not to tell: for, being blinded with pride, they despise the rest of the world, just as though their gloriousness and royalty ought to exempt them from the common state of mankind. And yet it is no marvel that mankind is so proudly and spitefully trodden under foot, considering that for the most part they shrink from bearing the yoke of Christ. But we must keep in mind that David is as a looking-glass wherein God setteth before us the continual holding on of his graces. Only we must see to it that the obedience of our faith may be answerable to his fatherly love, that he may acknowledge us for his people and inheritance. Now although the scripture oftentimes gives David the title of shepherd, yet, resigning that charge into the hands of God, he confesses himself in nowise meet for the same, saving so far forth as he is God's minister.

PSALM XXIX.

That he may humble all men unto God from the highest to the lowest, he sets forth his dreadful power from the variety of his wonderful works in nature, whereby he says we are awakened to give glory unto God, no less than if God should challenge the sovereignty unto himself by his own voice. And after he has stricken fear into the proud, who are not willing to yield, and exhorted them (not without a kind of reproof), he sweetly allures the faithful to the willing service of God.

[*A Song of David.*]

1 Yield unto the Lord, ye children of the mighty; yield unto the Lord, glory and strength.

2 Yield unto the Lord the glory of his name:

worship before the Lord, in the brightness of his sanctuary.

3 The voice of the Lord upon the waters; the God of glory thundereth; the Lord upon the great waters.

4 The voice of the Lord in power; the voice of the Lord in beauty.

1 *Yield unto the Lord.*] Although David's purpose was to bring all men to the service and fear of God, yet, forasmuch as the great estates that excel in dignity are more hard to be brought to order, he speaks expressly to them. Certain it is that the Greek interpreter was deceived by the affinity of the words, so that he translated it, *ye chilaren of Rammes.* And truly, as to the signification of the word, all the Hebrews agree together. But when they come to the matter, either they pervert or obscure the natural sense with their unmeaning glosses. For some expound it of angels, and some of the stars, and others will have these great men, of whom mention is made, to be the holy fathers. But David meant rather to correct the stateliness wherewith the princes of this world, being inebriated, lift up their horns against God. And this is the reason why he represents God with a terrible voice, by thunder, hail, storms, and lightnings, compelling these hardhearted and stiffnecked giants, who cannot bear to stand in awe of any heavenly power, unless they are struck down with fear. We see then, why, omitting others, he addresses himself peculiarly to the children of the mighty; namely, because nothing is more common among them, than to abuse their loftiness to impiety in challenging fiercely to themselves whatsoever belongs to God; that at least they may be compelled to submit themselves meekly unto God, and, in consideration of their own frailty, lean on his grace. Therefore he bids them to yield strength unto the Lord, because, beguiled by false imagination, they think that the power wherewith they are endued comes to them otherwise than from heaven. The sum is, that laying aside all stateliness and false opinion of their own power, they should glorify God as he deserveth. For he calls that the glory of his name, which is beseeming his majesty, of which the great men of the world are wont to defraud him. The repetition also shews that they must be vehemently urged ere they can be forced to acknowledge that which is right.

2 By *the brightness of his sanctuary,* he means not heaven, as some suppose, but the tabernacle of the covenant decked with the tokens of God's glory; for so it will appear by the

context. And the prophet makes mention advisedly of the place in which the true God had discovered himself, that all men should bid adieu to superstition, and employ themselves in his true service. For it were not enough for men to worship some one heavenly power under a confused notion, except they worshipped the only unchangeable God: which cannot be done until the world be reclaimed from all inventions of their own.

3 *The voice of the Lord upon the waters.*] Now he repeats the wonderful things of nature which I touched just now. And truly he might as well have set forth God's mightiness, as his goodness, in his works. Again; seeing there is nothing in the ordinary course of nature, through the whole frame of heaven and earth, which allures us not to the knowledge of God, he might have brought forth the sun and the stars, and the whole host of heaven, and the earth with the plentifulness thereof, as he has done elsewhere, Ps. xix. 1; but he chooses only those works of God which not only witness that the world was once made by him, and is governed by his command, but also which awaken the torpid, and draw them, as it were in spite of them, to worship him humbly, which even Horace was compelled to confess, who was not only a heathen poet, but also an epicure, and an impure despiser of God :—

> " A fugitive from heaven and prayer,
> I mock'd at all religious fear,
> Deep scienc'd in the mazy lore
> Of mad philosophy; but now
> Hoist sail, and back my voyage plough
> To that blest harbour, which I left before.
>
> For lo! that awful heavenly Sire,
> Who frequent cleaves the clouds with fire,
> Parent of day, immortal Jove,
> Late through the floating fields of air,
> The face of heaven serene and fair,
> His thundering steeds and winged chariot drove ;" &c.
> Horace, Odes, Lib. I. Ode xxxiv.

And experience itself shews that they who are most daring in despising God, are most abashed at thunders, storms, and similar terrors. Not without cause therefore does the prophet call us back to these particulars, which strike some feeling of the Godhead into the barbarous and dull-witted, and which stir up those that are the most lumpish and torpid. He says not that the sun rises daily, nor that the quickening

light is spread abroad by his beams; he says not that the rain drops down gently, to make the earth fruitful with its moisture; but he calls to witness the thunders, the violent showers, and such things as pierce men's minds with their dreadful motion. Surely God speaketh in all his creatures. But the prophet makes mention now of those sounds which by their sharp rebuking may correct our drowsiness, or rather our lethargy. For we have said that this language pertains especially to those who through wilful stubbornness cast off all knowledge of God, as much as in them lies. And the very phrases themselves express sufficiently that David's purpose was to subdue by fear the stubbornness which otherwise will not willingly yield. For he urges on them thrice, that God's voice is heard in great and violent showers. And in the next verse he adds, that the same voice is full of power and glorious brightness.

5 The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedar trees; I say, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.

6 And he maketh Lebanon to skip like a calf; and Sirion as it were a colt of the unicorns.

7 The voice of the Lord cleaveth out flakes of fire.

8 The voice of the Lord maketh the wilderness to shake; the Lord maketh the wilderness of Kadesh to tremble.

5 *The voice of the Lord breaketh, &c.*] We see how the prophet, to break the stubbornness of men, represents God in every word as terrible. And he seems indirectly to taunt the proud, and such as swell with vain presumption, with their madness, in that they hear not the thundering voice of God, which cleaves the air with thunderclaps, shakes the high mountains, and overthrows and casts down the loftiest trees. For what a monstrous thing is it, that whereas all the senseless parts of the world tremble before God, only men, who are endued with sense and reason, are not moved! Besides this, if they excel in genius and learning, they make enchantments to themselves to stop their own ears with, lest the voice of the Lord, be it never so low, should pierce to their understanding. For the philosophers do not think that they treat of inferior causes cunningly enough, unless they separate God a great way from his works. But devilish is that cunning, which by holding us in the contemplation of nature, turns us from God. If any one being desirous to know a man, should pass over his whole countenance and person, and stand looking only upon

the tips of his nails, his folly might well be laughed at. But yet greater fools are the philosophers, which of the mean and proximate causes weave themselves veils, lest they might be compelled to acknowledge the hand of God working openly. He makes mention chiefly of the cedars of Lebanon because there were very high and goodly ones there. And he makes mention of Lebanon and mount Hermon, and also of the wilderness of Kadesh, because these places were best known to the Jews. And he uses a metaphor highly poetical, with which he unites an hyperbole, in saying that *Lebanon skips like a calf at the voice of God*, and that Sirion, which is also mount Hermon, *leaps as a young unicorn*, which we know to be one of the swiftest and nimblest of beasts. And he alludes to the terrible crash of the thunderclaps, which seem in a manner to tear up the mountains by their roots. There is the same figure where he says, that *God driveth out flakes of fire*, namely, when the vapours being as it were stricken with his hammer, burst out into flashes and lightnings. Of these things Aristotle treats very acutely in his Meteors, as appertaining to the inferior causes, saying that he omits the chief point. Pleasant and profitable, indeed, were the searching out of those things, if, as it ought to do, it led us by the hand to the Author himself of nature. But forasmuch as the intermediate causes we meet with are so many stops that retard us, and keep us back, nothing is more untoward. For it is as if a man should stand about his first principles all his life long. Finally, it were nothing else but so to learn as that a man should know nothing. Therefore the only acumen that is praiseworthy, is to be lifted up in these chariots even unto heaven, that not only a confused noise may beat our ears, but also that the voice of the Lord may instruct us to godliness. Some expound the word יחיל otherwise; namely, that *God maketh the wilderness of Kadesh to travel with child*, because many miracles were wrought there as the people of Israel passed through it: which sense I reject as too far-fetched and too constrained. For David seems rather to allude to the common understanding of men: for whereas wildernesses are terrific of themselves, they are much more so to men when there are thunderings, hail, and storms. Nevertheless it displeases me not that by the figure synecdoche, the wilderness itself should be taken for the wild beasts; and so the next verse, wherein mention is made of hinds, will be added by way of exposition.

9 The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to bring forth, and discovereth the woods, and in his temple do all men speak his praise.

10 The Lord sitteth over the flood, the Lord, I say, sitteth king for ever.

11 The Lord shall give his people strength, the Lord shall bless his people in peace.

9 *The voice of the Lord, &c.*] Here is, as I said, a covert comparison. For it is against all reason, yea and monstrous, for men not to be moved at the voice of God, whose power exerts itself so effectually towards the wild beasts. Now truly it is foul unthankfulness not to feel his providence and government in the whole order of nature, but it is a detestable dulness that they are not taught, at least, by his rare and unwonted works, which compel even the wild and savage beasts to obey him. Some interpreters suppose that the hinds are chiefly named by reason of their hard calving, and I do not disapprove of it. The Lord's voice is said to discover the woods, either because no covert is able to keep it off, but that it pierceth into the deepest recesses and hollows, or else because the thunder and lightning, showers and stormy winds, beat off the leaves and make the trees bare: for either of these senses suits well. *In his temple.* Although God's voice fill the whole world, and spread itself to the uttermost borders thereof, yet the prophet says that its glory is set forth with praises only in his church, verily because God not only speaketh there in plain words, but also allureth the faithful gently to him. For his terrible voice, which thundereth divers ways in the air, doth so beat men's ears and strike their hearts, that they had yet rather go away from him than come nearer him: not to mention that a good part of men pass over the sound of God's voice in storms, showers, thunder and lightnings, with deaf ears. Inasmuch, therefore, as men profit not so far in that common school, as to submit themselves to God, good reason has David to say, that the faithful in an especial manner sing the praises of God in his temple: as, being familiarly taught by his fatherly voice, they wholly addict and consecrate themselves to his service. For no man sets forth God's glory aright, save he that is a willing worshipper and server of him. And it might be taken in the way of complaint, that David should accuse the dumbness of the whole world, because that whereas his voice soundeth everywhere, yet his praises are set forth nowhere but in his church. Notwithstanding, he seems to exhort all mankind to the praising of God's name after the example of the godly, and of set purpose to appoint the temple as it were the school of God's glory, that we should understand, that to the

knowing and praising of God aright, we have need of another voice than that which is heard by thunder, showers, and storms, in the air, mountains, and woods. For unless he teach us in plain speech, yea, and gently allure us unto him by giving us a taste of his fatherly love, we shall lie still dumb for evermore. Then is it the doctrine of salvation alone, which cheers our hearts and opens our mouths to sing his praises, by discovering manifestly his grace and his whole will unto us. This, therefore, is the place from whence we must learn the manner how to praise him. And surely we see how at that time there was no light of godliness in the whole world, save only in Judah: yea even the philosophers, who seemed to approach nearest to the knowledge of God, bring nothing at all that may glorify him aright. For whatsoever they write of religion, it is not only cold, but for the most part insipid. Therefore, the truth that can lead us to godliness shines only in his word.

10 *The Lord sitteth over the flood.*] Some think that David alludes to that memorable instance of God's vengeance when he drowned the whole world at once, because then he made it known to all ages, that he is the judge of men. Unto whom, although I assent in part, yet I extend his meaning further. For, in my judgment, David prosecutes one self-same subject still, giving us to understand that the very floods which menace destruction to the earth, are so governed by God's providence, as it appears that he always holds the stern. Therefore among other lessons of God's power David reckons this; that even when the elements seem to be mingled and confounded together in greatest distemperature of the air, yet doth God even then rule and moderate these disturbances from out of his heavenly throne; and therefore he adds in way of exposition, that God sits king for ever.

11 *The Lord shall give his people strength.*] He returns to his former meaning; namely, that although God shew his visible power to the whole world without exception, yet he displays the same after a peculiar manner towards his elect people; yea, he describes him far otherwise now than he did lately, namely, not such a one as beats down those that he speaks to with fear and terror, but rather such a one as upholds, cherishes, and strengthens them. The word *strength* comprises their whole state. Therefore whatsoever pertains to the maintenance of the life of the faithful, he means that the same depends upon God's grace only. And this he amplifies by the word *bless*. For God is said to bless those in peace, whom he handleth so liberally and courteously, that they want nothing to the prosperous course of their life and to full happiness. Hereby we may learn them, so to stand in awe

of God's government, as that we may nevertheless hope for all prosperity at his hand. And the more he is able to do by this immeasurable power, the more let us persuade ourselves, for a certainty, that we are fortified with an invincible defence.

PSALM XXX.

David, being delivered from some great danger, not only renders thanks to God by himself alone, but also allures and exhorts all holy men to this duty at the same time. Afterwards he confesses that forasmuch as he had soothed himself too carelessly in his prosperity, his boldness was justly corrected. Thirdly, after he has briefly uttered his sorrow, he returns again to giving of thanks.

[*A Psalm sung at the dedication of David's house.*]

2 I will exalt thee, O Lord, because thou hast exalted me, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.

3 O Lord, my God, I have cried to thee, and thou hast healed me.

4 Lord, thou hast brought me up again from the grave, thou hast quickened me from them that go down into the pit.

The interpreters doubt whether this Psalm were compiled by David, or whether some other of the prophets composed it after the Jews were returned from the captivity of Babylon. For by *his house* they understand the *temple*. But forasmuch as the title exhibits David's name expressly, it seems more likely that he speaks of a private house. Besides that, what some conjecture, that David was taken with a sore sickness when he was about to dedicate his palace, has no substantial reason to lean on. But rather one may conjecture by the sacred story, that as soon as he had built his palace, he dwelt there quietly and at his ease. For he said to the prophet Nathan, that it was a shame for himself to lie at rest in a house of cedar, and the ark of the covenant to lie under pelts. Again; to restrain that to sickness which is reported here of dangers, there is reason against. It is more credible that he commended this grace of God when, Absalom being slain, his faction destroyed, and that deadly commotion appeased, he returned into his kingdom as it were from

banishment. For he makes mention that he was therefore chastised by God's hand because, enjoying too much, and being in a manner drunk with success, he had falsely and fondly promised himself continual freedom from all adversity. Moreover, he had begun to dwell in that stately and royal palace whereof I have made mention awhile ago, before his realm was yet scarce restored to peace. Therefore as yet there could not creep upon him a forgetfulness of man's frailty, which might provoke God's wrath and procure him such danger as should bring him to the verge of destruction. Wherefore it is not against reason, that in this Psalm he sets forth God's gracious goodness, for recovery of his former estate. For he must needs dedicate his house again, which had been defiled by the incestuous whoredoms of Absalom, and by other wickednesses. And under this head there seems to be denoted his restoration, as well to life as to his kingdom; as if he should say, he had sung this hymn to God, after he had settled all public affairs, and dedicated his house after a solemn manner that he might live in his own family. Howbeit, concerning this ceremony of the law, this is to be noted briefly; that because we are very slow and cold in considering God's benefits, this exercise was commanded to the people of old time, that they should know that there is nothing whereof the use may be pure and lawful, without thanksgiving to God. Therefore, as in their first-fruits they imputed to God the increase of the whole year, so also by hallowing their houses they acknowledged themselves to be God's tenants, because he gave them room to lodge in. Wherefore, if levy for the wars was made, it was a just cause to keep a man at home. Moreover, by this custom they were put in mind that then each of them enjoyed his house aright and duly, when it was become as a hallowed place wherein godliness and the pure worship of God might flourish. For although the figures of the law are come to an end, yet must we hold us to the doctrine of Paul, that whatsoever things God appointeth to our use, the same are still made holy by faith and prayer.

2 *I will exalt thee, O Lord.*] Forasmuch as he had been lift up to the breath of life as it were from the grave, he promises to exalt the name of God. For like as when we are drowned in the deep, God lifteth us up aloft with his hand; so, on the other hand, it is our duty to exalt his praises with our mouth and tongue. As for the foes who he says received not matter of gladness, we may take them to have been as well household enemies as foreign. For although the wicked and evil disposed persons honoured him with slavish flattery, yet did they cherish secret hatred,

so that they were ready to have leaped on his neck, if occasion had been offered. In the second verse he reasons that he was saved by God's grace, because that even at the very instant of death he made his prayers to God only, and suddenly felt that he had not done so in vain. For hereby we gather more certainly, that God becometh the author of our welfare when he hath heard our prayers. But because the word רפא signifies *to heal*, the interpreters were led to restrain it *to sickness*. But forasmuch as we are assured that it is taken now and then *to restore*, or *set up again*, yea and also referred to an altar or house, when there is mention made of reparation, one may aptly expound it here of any manner of deliverance. For a man's life is in hazard, not only by sickness, but also by many other means. And we know that this manner of speaking is to be met with everywhere in the Psalms; namely, that David was restored to life as often as the Lord delivered him from any sore and extreme danger. Therefore, to amplify the matter, there is added by and by, *thou hast brought me up again from the grave*. For he thought he could not express the greatness of God's grace by words, except he likened the darkness of that time to *a grave and a pit*, when he was compelled to take himself to fearful flight, that he might save his life in lurking-holes, till the flame of the insurrection was quenched. Therefore, as one raised again to life, he proclaims that he had been plucked from present death by miracle. And surely, how miserably he was oppressed by overwhelming despair on all hands, appears by the holy history.

5 Sing unto the Lord, O ye meek of his, and acknowledge the memorial of his holiness.

6 For he is but awhile in his anger, but in his favour is life; weeping shall abide at the evening, and in the morning shall come joy.

5 *Sing unto the Lord, ye meek of his.*] That he may the better testify his thankfulness, he calls all the saints to bear him company in singing the praises of God; and from one particular species, he passes to the whole kind. For inasmuch as by being thus preserved beyond hope, he had by that example been thoroughly informed of God's continual and immeasurable goodness towards all the faithful, he bursts out into this exhortation, wherein he comprehends the common welfare of the whole church, as well as his own. For he rehearses not only of what sort he had found God toward himself, but also how frankly and with what prompt favour he is wont to help all those that are his. To be

brief; warned by one instruction, he refers his own experience to a general doctrine. What the proper adjective חסידים implies, wherewith David often distinguishes the faithful, is already shewn in Psalm xvi. For the heavenly adoption must kindle in them the desire to do well, that they may resemble their father's disposition, *who maketh his sun to rise upon the just and unjust*, Matt. v. 45. But there is nothing wherein men may approach nearer unto God, than in benefiting or doing good turns. *The memorial of his holiness*, in the second member of the verse, may be referred to the tabernacle, as though David commanded all God's children to come forth before the ark of the covenant, which was the memorial of God's presence. For the letter ל often denotes a place. Notwithstanding, I willingly subscribe to the opinion of those who would have the word *memorial* to import as much as *name*. And surely God hath made himself worthy to be renowned by his works, wherein shines an image of his glory; the beholding whereof ought to stir us up to praise him.

6 *For he is but awhile in his anger.*] It is beyond all controversy, that *life* is set against *awhile*, and that therefore life is taken for a long duration, or the continual progress of time from day to day. And David confesses that if God at any time chastise his servants, he not only mitigateth the rigour of his punishment, but also is immediately pacified, and moderateth his anger: but prolongeth his forbearance and favour to a remote time. And, as I said, he chose rather to utter a general sentence, than to speak severally of himself; that all the godly might understand, that this continued extension of God's grace pertains unto them. Nevertheless, we gather hereby with what great meekness of heart, and with what ready obedience he submitted his back to God's rod. We know that even from the first bloom of youth, almost all his life long, he was so baited with manifold miseries one upon another, that he might have been accounted wretched and forlorn above all other men. And yet in setting forth God's goodness, he acknowledges himself to have been harassed by adversity, but lightly and a small time, and as it were but in passing. And hereupon came that meek and upright mind of his, that he esteemed more God's benefits, and yielded himself more quietly to the enduring of the cross, than the world is commonly wont to do. If the world go on our side, we swallow up God's benefits without feeling; or at least, we let them slip through our own sluggishness. But as soon as any heaviness or adversity befall us, we make a whining at his rigour as though he had never dealt liberally and mercifully

with us. To be brief; our own impatience and longing to be out of pain makes every minute an age. Again; our repining and unthankfulness imagines God's gracious goodness to be but of a moment's endurance, how long soever it continue towards us. Our own wickedness, therefore, is the only obstacle why all of us feel not God's anger to be short, and his favour to be prolonged towards us during all the course of our life. For it is not for nought that he so often avoucheth himself to be merciful and favourable to a thousand generations, long-suffering, slow to anger, and ready and easy to forgive; and that which he says by the prophet Isaiah, liv. 7, because it pertains to the kingdom of Christ, must needs be fulfilled; namely, *For a moment have I punished thee in mine anger, but I will gather thee together with endless mercy.* I confess, our state in this world is wrapped in so many miseries, and checquered vicissitude, that scarce a day passes without some trouble and grief. Again, among so many doubtful chances, we must needs be full of thought and fear. Therefore, whithersoever men turn themselves, a maze of miseries besets them round about. But, although God terrify the faithful with many signs of his displeasure, and also bring them low; yet he always besprinkleth them with the sweetness of his favour, to temper and assuage their sorrow. Therefore if they weigh his displeasure and his favour in equal balance, it will always be true that this displeasure is but short, and that his favour extendeth even to the end of life. Howbeit, it is meet to proceed yet further; for it were amiss to enclose God's favour within the bounds of this transitory life. And this must we take for a certainty; that none but such as by tasting the heavenly life are carried above the world, feel this unwearied and everlasting course of God's favour earnestly, so as to endure his chastisements cheerfully. Therefore Paul, 2 Cor. iv. 17, calls us back thither, that he may strengthen us with invincible patience: *Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, purchaseth us an eternal weight of glory, wonderfully above measure; while we look not upon the things that are seen, but upon the things that are hidden.* By the way, it is to be considered that God never layeth so sore or lasting pains upon his servants, but that he withdraweth his hand from time to time, and seasoneth the bitterness of their sorrow with the sweetness of some comfort. So, whosoever shall have raised himself to the minding of the heavenly life, he shall never faint under afflictions, last they never so long; but comparing them with the exceeding great and manifold gifts of God, shall yield so much honour to the latter, that his goodness shall outweigh his anger an

hundred-fold. In the second member he repeats the same sentence again figuratively. He means not simply that the affliction shall last but one night; but if any dimness light upon them, as it were in the eventide, or at the sunset, a little while after light shall rise again unto them, which shall refresh their sorrow-stricken hearts. David's purpose tends to this effect; that if we were not over heady, the Lord would always in due season minister occasion of gladness to us, even when he hath seemed to overwhelm us with the mist of miseries for a little while, as though a morning should dawn after the night.

7 And in mine ease I had said, I shall not be moved for ever.

8 Lord, of thy good pleasure thou hadst established strength to my mountain; thou hast hidden thy face, and I have been sore stricken.

9 Lord, I cried unto thee, and I prayed to my Lord.

10 What profit is there in my blood, when I shall be gone down into the pit? shall dust praise thee? or shall it declare thy truth?

11 Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me; Lord, be thou my helper.

7 *And in mine ease, &c.*] This is the confession of which I spake before; wherein he acknowledges himself to have suffered just and deserved punishment for his foolish carelessness; namely, in that forgetting his estate, he had set his heart too much on his prosperity. For by the term *ease*, he means the quiet and happy estate of his reign. Others translate the word שלוה *abundance*, in which signification it is often used in other places; but the term *ease* suits the context better, as if he should say, when fortune smiled upon him on all sides, and there appeared no danger to be afraid of, his mind was steeped as it were in a sound sleep, so that he believed that his happy estate should never come to an end. For this fleshly confidence creeps even upon the saints oftentimes, when they sink down in their delights as it were in the lees of wine; and therefore Jeremiah, xxxi. 18, likens himself to a wild bullock, before the Lord had tamed him and inured him to the yoke. Now although at first sight this seem to be but a light fault, yet one may gather by the punishment thereof, how sorely it displeaseth

God; which will be no wonder to us, if we consider from what root it springs, and again what fruits it brings forth. For as innumerable deaths hover continually before our eyes, and there are so many examples of changes to awaken us to fear and wariness, they must needs be bewitched with devilish pride, who persuade themselves that their life shall be privileged from the common lot of the whole world. They see the whole earth confounded in undistinguishing fluctuation, and every portion of it in a manner tossed to and fro; and yet, as if they were not of the number of men, they imagine that they shall always stand fast, and not be subject to any changes. Hence wantonness of the flesh, that they licentiously follow their own lusts. Hence pride and cruelty, and neglect of prayer. For how should they flee unto God who are pricked or moved with no feeling of their own need? The children of God have also a godly confidence peculiar to them, which keeps their minds quiet in the troublesome storms of the world; like as David, although he had seen the whole world shaken, yet, leaning upon God's promise, was bound to hope well of the continuance of his reign. But the faithful, although lifted up aloft on the wings of faith, they despise adversity; yet because they consider themselves subject to the common troubles, they frame themselves to sufferance, they are every hour in readiness to receive wounds, they shake off drowsiness, and exercise themselves in the warfare to which they know they are appointed; they put themselves under God's protection in their alarms, and think not themselves in safety elsewhere than under his hand. But it was otherwise with David, who, being caught in the enticements of his prosperous state, had promised himself continual ease, rather upon his own imagination than the warrant of God's word. The same happened also to the holy king Hezekiah, who having been touched lately with a sore sickness, as soon as all was well and according to his desire, was carried by the vanity of the flesh to pride and vaunting of himself. 2 Chron. xxxii. 24. Whereby he teaches us to be the more cautious, that Satan bewitch us not with his flatteries when elated with prosperity. Therefore the more bounteously God dealeth with any man, so much the more cautiously let him take heed to himself of such snares. And yet it is not to be believed, that David was so benumbed that, despising God, he should make a mock at all misfortunes, as we see many Cyclopses do, who insolently scoff at all God's judgments, when they are drowned in the luxury of their own surfeiting; but a kind of effeminate listlessness had possessed his mind, so that he became more cold to pray, and depended

not upon the favour of God; in short, trusted too much to his transient and frail felicity.

8 *Lord, of thy good pleasure.*] In this verse is noted the difference between the trust that is founded upon the word of God, and the carelessness of the flesh, which springs from presumption. For the faithful, when they lean upon God, are not in the meanwhile slow in praying; but rather, considering earnestly with what a throng of dangers they are beset, and how many examples of man's frailty they see, they take warning from them to pour out their hearts unto God. The prophet, therefore, offended in this behalf; that, fastening his anchor in his present wealth and peace, or spreading wide his sails to prosperous winds, he depended not upon the free favour of God, so that he might be ready at all hours to resign into his hand whatsoever he had bestowed upon him. For the antithesis is to be marked, between the stability, the assurance of which is conceived from the absence of trouble, and that which is based on the free favour of God. He says that *strength was established to his mountain*, which some interpreters expound of mount Sion. Others take it for some stronghold, because in old time fortresses were wont to be built upon mountains and high places. As for me, as I take this name of *mountain* metaphorically for solid support, so I willingly agree that the prophet alludes to mount Sion. David, then, accuses his own folly, because he had not, as it became him, considered that there was no assuredness in the nest that he had built him, but in the good pleasure of God alone. *Thou hast hidden thy face.* Now he confesses, after that he is bereaved of God's gifts, that his mind was, as it were by hellebore, purged from the dotage of evil trustfulness. A wonderful and incredible matter surely, that God, by hiding his face, and as it were by overcasting him with darkness, should enlighten the eyes of his servant, who saw nothing in the broad daylight. But so is it needful for us to be violently shaken, to drive away our self-delusion, which chokes our faith, and hinders our calling upon God, and altogether stupifies us with a soothing infatuation. Now, if David had need of such a remedy, we are not endued with such soundness but that it is expedient for us to have the fat of our carelessness cleared away by penury. Therefore we have no cause to marvel, though God oftentimes hide his face; at the sight whereof we become purblind, when it shineth brightly upon us.

9 *Lord, I cried, &c.*] Now follows the fruit of his chastisement: namely, that David, who erst slept soundly on both sides, and fostered his sloth with forgetfulness, now

suddenly starting up in fear, begins to cry unto God. For as the iron that has gathered rust by continual lying still, cannot be put to any use till it be heated again in the fire, and beaten with the hammer, so, after that the carelessness of the flesh has once gotten the mastery, no man can give himself cheerfully unto prayer till he be thoroughly softened and subdued by the cross. And the chief profit of afflictions is this, that they call us back to crave God's grace by making us to know our own miseries.

10 *What profit is there.*] Some expound it thus: What may it avail me to have lived, unless thou prolong my life till I have finished the course of my calling? But this sense seems to be too strained: and surely, *blood* is not put here for *life*, but for *death:* as if he should say, What profit shalt thou get by my death? which one may gather more certainly by the other member, where he complains that his dead body will be unable to shew forth the praises of God. Notwithstanding, it seems that mention was made of *truth*, expressly: because it was not meet that David should be taken out of the world by untimely death before God had performed his promise concerning him that should be his heir. For whereas there is a mutual respect between God's promises and our faith, truth is as it were the means by which God sheweth openly that he dealeth not frankly with us in words to pamper us with vain hope, and in the end to disappoint us. Moreover, to obtain a longer life, he grounds his argument upon the praises of God, to set forth which we are born and created: as if he should say, To what purpose hast thou made me, O God, but that during the whole course of my life, I might be a witness and a herald of thy grace, to glorify thy name? But this desire of mine will death cut off; for when I am dead I shall be put to silence for ever. Now here arises a question; whether the death of the faithful do not glorify God, as well as their life. David spake not simply of death: for he has added the circumstance which I have handled in the sixth Psalm. For inasmuch as God had promised him a successor, he had good cause to be afraid of being disappointed by the cutting off of this hope, so that he was compelled to cry out, *What profit is there in my blood?* For it was to the behoof of God's glory, that he should remain alive until, by obtaining his desire, he should bear record to God that he had performed and fulfilled his promise. In the end of the verse, by demanding whether dust shall praise God, he does not at all bereave the dead of power to praise him, as I have shewn in the sixth Psalm. For if the faithful, being encumbered with the burden of flesh, do nevertheless exercise

themselves in this duty of godliness, how should they cease and sink into sloth, when they are disencumbered and set loose from the bonds of the body? It is to be considered, therefore, that David treats not professedly of the state of the departed, or wherein they occupy themselves, but only that he has a respect to what end we live in this world; namely, that we should be setters forth of God's glory one to another. Having performed this exercise to the utmost limit of life, in death we become dumb.

11 *Hear, O Lord.*] In this clause he tempers and corrects his former complaint; for it had been against reason that he should expostulate with God like one past hope of recovery, and to have ended in that murmuring. Therefore after he has mourningly demanded what his death should profit God, he encourages himself to a freer form of praying; and, conceiving new hope, calls upon God for mercy and help. And he sets God's favour in the foremost place, from whence he ought to hope for the help which he required.

12 Thou hast turned my mourning into dancing, thou hast loosed my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.

13 That glory may sing unto thee, and not cease: O Lord, my God, I will set forth thy praise for ever.

12 *Thou hast turned, &c.*] He closes the Psalm with thanksgiving, as he began it. For he affirms it to have been the work and benefit of God, that he escaped in safety: afterwards he subjoins the final object; which is, that he might bestow the residue of his life in publishing the praises of God. Moreover, as David confesses that he was not so blockish or iron-hearted but that he mourned in heaviness and sorrow, so he shews that his very mourning drove him to desire God to turn away his wrath. Both these things are most worthy to be marked: first, lest we imagine a stoical hardheartedness in the saints, that should take away all feeling of grief; and secondly, that we may know that by their mourning they minded repentance. This latter he denotes by the expression *sackcloth:* for it was a common thing among the people of old time, to put on sackcloth when they mourned; and that was for no other intent but to come forth humbly before the heavenly judge, and to sue for pardon in coarse apparel after the manner of condemned persons. Also we know that the eastern people were, above all others, given to ceremonies. Now, then, we perceive that David was not void of grief, although he submitted

himself patiently to God. But we see, at the same time, that his heaviness was according to God, as Paul terms it; for he betook himself to sackcloth for repentance sake. By the word *dancing* there is not meant every manner of wantonness or heathenish leaping and frisking; but a sober and holy exhibition of gladness, such as the holy scripture maketh mention of when David conveyed the ark of the covenant into its place. Howbeit, if one may have leave to conjecture, even hereby it may be gathered that that great danger whereof David has spoken, is improperly restrained to any sickness. For it is not likely that he put on sackcloth when he lay bedridden. Indeed, this were not a reason of sufficient strength, in itself; but in a doubtful matter it is not void of weight. David therefore means, that laying aside his mourning apparel, he returned from sorrow and heaviness to joy and mirth: and this he ascribes to the grace of God alone, affirming him to have been his deliverer.

13 *That glory may sing unto thee.*] In this verse he expresses more plainly, that he acknowledges to what end he had been delivered from death by the hand of God; and that he will be careful to render the rightful duty of thankfulness unto God. Some refer the name of *glory* to the body, and some to the soul, or to the higher faculties of the soul. And because there is no pronoun added, others thought good to translate it in the accusative case, and to supply the sentence with this expression, *every man;* as if the prophet, accounting it a benefit worthy to be set forth with the open commendations of all men, had said, That every man may sing glory unto thee. But forasmuch as such interpretations are constrained, I abide in the opinion which I have set down. It is certain that the word כבוד is sometimes, by a metaphor, taken for a *tongue*, as has been seen in Psalm xvi. 9. Moreover, as David adds soon after, *I will set forth thy praise for ever*, the context requires that he should make mention here peculiarly of his own duty. The sense, then, is this: Lord, because I acknowledge myself to have been preserved, that thy praises should sound in my tongue, I will perform this charge faithfully, and execute my duty even unto the death. *To sing and not to cease*, is an amplifying, among the Hebrews: as if it had been said, That my tongue should not be mute, or defraud God of his due praise, but rather consecrate itself to his glory.

PSALM XXXI.

David, being delivered out of some great danger, or perhaps out of many, first recites what prayers he conceived in his mind, when the terrors of death stood before him: he then adds a thanksgiving, and that not of the ordinary sort. For he celebrates at great length his deliverance, and exhorts all the godly to be of good hope, since they see so excellent and so notable an example of God's goodness towards him.

[*To the chief chanter. A Psalm of David.*]

1 In thee, O Lord, have I trusted, let me not be put to shame for ever: deliver me in thy righteousness.

2 Bow down thine ear unto me, make haste to deliver me: be unto me a rock of strength, and an house of defence to save me.

3 For thou art my tower and my bulwark: and for thy name's sake shalt thou guide me and lead me forth.

4 Pluck me out of the net which they have hidden for me, for thou art my strength.

1 *In thee, O Lord, &c.*] Some are of opinion that this Psalm was made by David, after he had, beyond all hope, escaped safe out of the wilderness of Maon; and I do not dissent from it, although it be but a doubtful conjecture. Certainly, he makes mention either of some one of the greatest, or of more of his dangers. In the first place he shews what form of prayer he had used in his sorrow and distress, in which words he breathes affections astonishingly glowing. He takes it for a ground of hope, that he has trusted or trusts in the Lord; for the verb in the past tense seems to betoken a continued act. Indeed, he held this for a principle, that it is not possible that the trust which leans upon God, should beguile us. By the way, he alleges nothing but faith alone; promising himself deliverance only in this respect, because he believes that he shall be saved by the help and grace of God. But as this sentence has been expounded elsewhere already, and will occur often hereafter, it is enough to have glanced at it with a word or two. Would to God all men would so exercise themselves in it, that as often as we approach unto God, we might protest with David, that our prayers proceed from this fountain;

namely, that we are persuaded that our welfare is laid up in the hand of God. The particle *for ever* may be expounded two ways: for as God now and then withdraweth his grace, it will not be amiss to make the sense thus: Although I am now left destitute of thine aid, yet cast me not off to the end, or for evermore. And so David, intending to arm himself with patience against temptations, would set this disappointing against temporal distresses. If any one had rather take it thus: that whatsoever misfortune betide, God is always ready to rescue, and reacheth out his hand from time to time, according as cause requires, I reject not this sense either. And he desires to be delivered in God's righteousness, because God proves himself righteous in keeping faith with his servants. They reason too subtly who say that David flees to the righteousness which God granteth freely to those that are his, because he is void of righteousness of works in himself; and those foolishly, who think that God preserveth the saints for their own righteousness' sake, because they have so deserved that in justice they should be recompensed with reward. For it is easy to gather, from the frequent application of the Psalms, that God's righteousness is taken for his faithfulness, wherewith he guardeth all his servants that commit themselves to his protection and defence. David, therefore, establishes his hope from the nature of God, because he cannot deny himself.

2 *Bow down thine ear.*] These words express with what great ardour David's mind was inflamed to pray; for he affects not splendour of language or ornament, after the manner of rhetoricians, but only in suitable figures describes the vehemency of his affection. Moreover, in that desire of making haste, is shewn the greatness of the danger; as if he had said, that it would soon be all over with his life, except God made haste to rescue him. By the names *tower*, *bulwark*, and *rock*, he means that he is too weak to withstand his enemies, and therefore that his only hope rests in the protection of God.

3 *For thou art my tower.*] This verse may be read in one unbroken sentence, *As thou art to me as good as a fortified tower, for thy name's sake guide me, and lead me forth all my life long.* And so the conjunction copulative *and* would be superfluous, as in many other places. Nevertheless, I incline another way rather; that David, by interposing this reflection, encourages himself not only to earnestness of praying but also to confidence of obtaining: for we know that it is an ordinary matter with him, to mingle such things with his prayers as may avail to the taking away of

doubt, and to confirm assurance. Therefore, after he has declared his necessity, now to gather courage, and to raise up himself, he determines that his desire shall certainly have good success. Whereas he had said before, *be unto me a rock, and a bulwark*, now he adds, *Surely thou art my tower, and my bulwark;* meaning thereby, that he threw not out these words rashly, as the faithless are wont to do, whom fear of the doubtful issue of things holds in suspense, and who yet crave many things at God's hand. From hence also he draws another assurance; that he shall have God for his guide and governor during the whole course of his life. And he denotes one thing by two terms, by reason of the sundry casualties, as I take it, and the sudden vicissitudes wherewith man's life is whirled round; as if he had said, Whether I must creep up steep hills, or struggle over rough places, or walk among briers and thorns, I trust that thou wilt be my continual guide. Moreover, because men shall always find occasion of wavering in themselves, David desires God by express words, that he would have regard to his own name and glory, according as he is not induced to help us from any other consideration; and so it is to be borne in mind, that God's name or glory, in consideration that it is set against all deserts, is accounted the only cause of our welfare. In the next verse, under the similitude of a net, he seems to note the treasons and crafts wherewith he was encompassed by his enemies. For we know there were divers conspiracies formed to kill him, which would have left him no escape; and that his enemies, excelling in subtilty, for their incredible hatred towards him, had bent themselves more eagerly against him, than that he could by man's power or policy take care of himself. For this cause he calls God *his strength*, as if he should say that God alone is sufficient to rend all the nets in which he sees afflicted men ensnared.

5 Into thy hand will I commit my soul; thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, God of truth.

6 I have hated all such as haunt deceitful vanities: and I have trusted in the Lord.

7 I will be glad and rejoice in thy goodness, because thou hast regarded my trouble: thou hast known my soul in distress.

8 And thou hast not shut me up in the hand of mine enemy; but hast set my feet at large.

5 *Into thy hand.*] Again David lays his faith before

God, and protests that he yields so much honour to God's providence, that he disburdens all his cares upon it. For whosoever commits himself into God's hand and custody, he not only looks to him as the arbiter of life or death to him, but also rests quietly upon his protection in all dangers. Doubtless, by the verb of the future tense, he denotes a continued act, and therefore it may be fitly translated in the present tense. It is also to be noted, that it is not possible any man should unfeignedly commit his life unto God, but he that considers himself exposed to a thousand deaths, and perceives his life to hang even by a thread, or rather to differ nothing from a breath that passes away. So David, being at the uttermost point of despair, leaves nothing to himself but this; namely, that he may proceed in his race upon trust that God is the keeper and governor of his life. And it is a wondrous thing, that notwithstanding so many things assail us, scarce one person in a hundred is so wise as to place his life in the hands of God. Many live merry and careless for a time, as though their estate were a state of rest, and free from all inconvenience; but as soon as any fear encounters them, they are ready to die for anguish. Thus it comes to pass that they never commit themselves to God, either because they deceive themselves with vain enchantments, or else because they are stricken with fear, or so stupified with amazedness, that they have no taste of his fatherly carefulness. Furthermore, since various tempests of anxiety buffet us, yea, and sometimes also throw us headlong down, or pluck us from the right course of duty, or at least push us from our standing; the one only remedy to salve all these things, is that God, who is the author of life, should be also the preserver of the same; and the only relief from all burdens is, that despair swallow us not up overwhelmed with sorrow. Seeing, then, that God vouchsafes to take care of our life, and to rule it, although sundry deaths hang over us from time to time, yet let us learn always to flee to this sanctuary. Yea rather, the more perils any man is subject to, so much the more heedfully let him bethink himself of it. Finally, let this be our shield against all assaults of dangers, and let this be our haven against all tossings and tempests; that although our welfare be past all hope of recovery, yet is God a faithful preserver thereof. And out of this again must spring prayer, that God will take upon him the defence and maintenance of the same. Also this confidence will make every man address himself with forward obedience to do the duty of his vocation, and always to go forth constantly and fearlessly to the end of his course. For how comes it about, that there are

so many slothful and indolent persons, and that others perfidiously forsake their duty, but because, over anxious about the issue of things, they are afraid of dangers and inconveniences, and in the mean time thrust God's providence aside. To be brief, whosoever rests not upon God's providence, so that he commits his life to his maintenance and protection, he has not yet well learned what it is to live. And on the contrary part, whosoever takes God for the keeper of his life, he shall not doubt of the safety thereof even in the midst of death. For we must not put our life into God's hand, only to have him preserve it safe in this world, but also to have him save it from destruction in death itself, even as Christ hath taught us by his own example: for as David wished to have his life prolonged even in the danger of death, so Christ passed the goal of this transitory life in suchwise as that his soul might be saved in death. Therefore this is a general prayer, whereby the faithful commend their life to God: first, that he defend it with his hand as long as it is subject to the dangers of this world; and secondly, that he preserve it safe by his secret custody in death, wherein is nothing seen but destruction. Moreover, we must persuade ourselves for a certainty, that we are never forsaken of God, neither in life nor in death; because that whom he by his defence bringeth safe to their end, them also receiveth he to himself at length when they die. This is one of the chief places of scripture most suitable to correct distrust; first, that the faithful disquiet not themselves beyond measure with foolish cares and anxieties; and secondly, that they be not so dismayed with fear, that they depart from their duty, that they faint not or shrink aside to gape after vain hope and deceitful helps, that they succumb not under terrors, and finally that they be not afraid of death, which, though it destroy the flesh, yet cannot quench the soul. But to overcome all temptations, this ought to bear chief sway, that Christ, in commending his soul to his Father at his death, took all the souls of his servants into his keeping. Therefore also Stephen, Acts vii. 59, calls upon him to be his keeper; saying, *Lord Jesus, receive my soul.* Now as the soul is the seat of life, therefore it is well enough known to be taken for the life. *Thou hast redeemed me.* Some turn *hast* into *shalt*, but I think they have no reason to do so; for I doubt not, but that David encourages himself to trust upon God, by calling to remembrance the proofs of his grace which he had felt: for it confirms us mightily for the time to come, when we can persuade ourselves for a certainty, that God will regard our life, because he hath been our deliverer already heretofore. And hereto serves the

epithet with which he distinguishes God; for he calls God true, or faithful, because he believes he will continue the same for ever after, that he hath been to him heretofore. And so by this bond he unites boldness to pray, and hope of help to come with his former benefits; as if he should say, Lord, thou that continuest always like thyself, and alterest not thy mind after the manner of men, hast already witnessed, by very deed, that thou art the maintainer of my welfare. Now, therefore, I put my soul, whereof thou hast been the preserver, into thine hand. That which David speaks here of the earthly life, that does Paul, 2 Tim. i. 12. transfer to the everlasting salvation. *I know*, says he, *to whom I have committed it, and that he is able to keep that which I have put him in trust with.* And surely, since that David conceived so great confidence from temporal deliverance, we are more than niggardly and unthankful, if the redemption purchased by the blood of Christ, furnish us not with invincible courage against all the practices of Satan.

6 *I have hated.*] That he may the better express that his faith was thoroughly fixed in God, he affirms himself to have been clear from the sinful affections that are wont to turn our minds away from God, and wherewith the unbelievers are for the most part tainted. For, as we know, the opposition of contraries illustrates a matter the better. But to restrain the word חבל to magical arts, as some interpreters do, is against reason. Truly I confess that the Eastern people were sore given to such illusions, so that it was a common malady among them. But seeing that the crafts are innumerable wherewith Satan ensnares men's minds, and the enticements as many wherewith he turns them from God, it is not anywise likely that the prophet should note but one species only. Therefore whatsoever vain hopes we feign to ourselves, which may draw us back from our trust in God, David calls them generally *vanities;* yea, and vanities of deceitfulness or lying, because although they feed us with promise of great things for the time, yet in the end they beguile us and disappoint us. Therefore he testifies that he casts away all the vanities which men are wont to invent to build up hopes for themselves, and leans only upon God. Now, then, as not only every man makes himself drunk with the allurements of the world, but also one of them deceives another, the prophet avouches expressly, that he hated all such as entangled themselves with such leasings; so that we must by all means eschew them, unless we will be snared wilfully in their hurtful toils. The second member must be read jointly, *I have trusted in the Lord,* because it both alleges the cause of the hatred, and

therewith witnesses that men put not their trust in God, unless they abhor all things that may call them from him.

7 *I will be glad.*] Here is inserted a thanksgiving, though many had rather that the sentence should be broken, and that David should make a vow if he were delivered out of the present peril. But because there is no condition annexed, I am rather of opinion, that breaking off the continuance of his prayer, he promises himself an end, for which he may justly give thanks. And it is no marvel that divers affections are mingled in the Psalms, wherein David has set forth as well his own temptations as the wrestlings of faith. Again; inasmuch as he sung the praises of God after he had already obtained deliverance, he now and then comprehends divers times, as he says here, *that God had regarded his trouble;* meaning by regard, that he had been helped in very deed. And that he may the better confirm this, he adds that he was not delivered into the hands of his enemy: in which words there is an implied antithesis; namely, that when he was enclosed on all sides with severe distress, he was wonderfully delivered by God. To the same purpose also pertains that which follows; namely, that his feet were set at large, for thereby is betokened a sudden and unlooked-for change.

9 Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed for anger, so is my heart also and my belly.

10 For my life is wasted with heaviness, and my years with mourning: my strength breaketh down in my sorrow, and my bones are consumed.

11 I was a reproach by reason of all my enemies; yea even unto my neighbours exceedingly, and a fear unto mine acquaintance; and they that saw me afar shunned me.

12 I am forgotten as one dead from the heart; I am become like a broken vessel.

13 For I have heard the railing of the multitude, and fear encloseth me about while they lay their heads together against me, and take counsel how to rid me of my life.

9 *Have mercy upon me, &c.*] That he may move God to succour him, he sets forth the grievousness of his misery and grief with many complaints; not because there need reasons to persuade God, but because he giveth the faithful

leave to deal familiarly with him, that they may disburden themselves of their care. For the more misery they are oppressed with, so much the more raise they up themselves to hope of obtaining help, when they bewail them before God. And although the expressions may seem hyperbolical, yet doubt I not but it was David's purpose to lay his inmost feelings open to the world. First he says that his eyes, his heart, and his belly consumed for grief; whereby it appears that it was neither lightly nor for a short time, that he was thus tormented and vexed. Surely, he was a man of such meekness, that he would not have been in a chafe for a trifling cause, nor have fretted himself from impatience of sorrow. Again; he had now a long time been inured to the endurance of miseries; therefore he broke not out into such great displeasure, but upon most hard, yea, and incredible constraint of trouble. And by the word *anger* he shews himself not to have been of iron-like firmness, or so void of passions but that his sorrow brake forth into excess of vehemence and heat. Whereby we gather that the saints had oftentimes hard and sore encounters with their own passions, and that their patience was not utterly free from heaviness; but that by wrestling with all their soul they obtained thus much in the end, that the accumulation of their miseries overwhelmed them not. By *the life* some understand the vital senses; which interpretation, although I reject not altogether, yet I like better to take it simply, that being consumed away with heaviness, he felt that his life wasted and his years slipped away. And in these words again he bewails not so much his own susceptibility, as the soreness of his miseries; though David was not ashamed to confess freely his own weakness, of which he sought remedy. Whereas he says, *his strength wasted away in his sorrow*, some interpreters like better to expound it *under iniquity;* and I confess that the word עון signifies both; yea, oftener it signifies an *offence* or *fault*. But as it is taken now and then for punishment, I have chosen that which seemed to agree best with the context; and although it be true that whatsoever adversity David suffered at any time, he is wont to ascribe it to his own fault; yet, forasmuch as in this place he does but recite his miseries only, without making mention of the cause, it is probable that he expresses one thing divers ways, according to his custom.

11 *By reason of all mine enemies.*] Others translate it *more than mine enemies*, and because the letter מ is often taken comparatively among the Hebrews, they gather this sense, that David's friends and acquaintances disdained him more than all his enemies did. But in my judgment he

meant another thing; namely, that whereas he was hated everywhere, and that his enemies had drawn well nigh the whole realm to take part with them against him, he had an evil name even among his friends and kinsfolk, even as the common opinion is wont to carry away our minds after the manner of a violent tempest. And therefore I suppose that the copulative ו was put for amplification sake, because David was hated not only by strangers that knew him not before, but also by the chiefest of his friends. He adds also, that when they espied him afar off, they fled from him. For by the adverb *afar* he means that they vouchsafed not to let the wretched soul come near them, but rather shunned him when they saw him never so far off, lest any infection of his misery might light upon them, because they thought it might turn to their prejudice and dishonour to shew any sign of friendship towards him.

12 *I am forgotten.*] He pursues the same sentence still, and complains that he is as entirely blotted out of all men's remembrance as if he were dead. For although the memorial of some men flourish after their death among those that live, yet most commonly it is wont to vanish away, because there is neither any dealing between the quick and the dead, neither can the living further or help the dead by any services that they can render them. The same thing he confirms by the similitude of a broken vessel, whereby is betokened utter contempt and abasement, as if he had said he had been unworthy to have been made any account of, or to have been set by any more. Lastly, he adds that he was everywhere railed upon and continually put in fear. Though I would like better that the word רבים, should be translated *great* than *many*: for thereby is the unworthiness of the matter increased, if noble men, who excel no less in judgment than in authority, slander and defame us as wicked persons, because whatsoever proceeds from them has the effect of a prejudgment among the common people. The sense then will agree very well, that as David was reproachfully condemned by the whole order of the nobility; so the innocence of the afflicted man was cast into the shade by their splendour; which sense is confirmed by that which he adds immediately after, *fear encloses me about while they lay their heads together against me.* For, seeing he speaks of the same persons still, sure it is, that this agrees more fitly with the nobility than the common people. Moreover we see that the ungodly conspired in suchwise with their crafty devices among themselves to destroy David, that first they made him to be hated as a wicked man and a castaway, and so rent him with misreports that they might hide their own insolence

under the gloss of gravity, in consulting among themselves to destroy him, as if he were now in nowise to be borne. And therefore it is no marvel if his mind were wounded with so many and so sharp temptations, according as has been seen just now.

14 Yet have I trusted in thee, O Lord; I have said, Thou art my God.

15 My times are in thy hand; pluck me out of the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.

16 Make thy countenance to shine upon thy servant; preserve me in thy goodness.

17 Lord, let me not be ashamed, for I have called upon thee; let the ungodly be put to shame, and to silence in the grave.

18 Let the lying lips be made dumb, which in pride and disdainfulness speak hardly against the righteous.

14 *Yet have I trusted in thee, &c.*] Here is put the copulative ו, instead of the adversative particle *but*. For David, setting the steadfastness of his faith against all the assaults of the temptations which he has rehearsed, denies that he ever fainted, but rather stood steady in hoping for safety at God's hand. And yet he avouches not himself to have been so stout-hearted, but that according to the weakness of the flesh he was almost prostrate. For although these things seem contrary to outward appearance, yet must they be joined together; namely, that he pined away for grief and was bereft of all energy, and yet was sustained with good hope, so that he ceased not from calling upon God. Therefore he was not so plunged in the darkness of sorrow and cruel torments, but that the secret light of faith shined within his heart, neither groaned he so under the huge burden of temptations, but that he nevertheless plucked up a good heart to call upon God. He therefore struggled through many obstacles, till at length he got up to this confession. Afterwards he defines the manner of his hope, namely, how he thought with himself that God would never fail him. But we must mark this manner of speaking; *I said, thou art my God*, whereby he signifies that he believed it so thoroughly in his heart, that he admitted no doubting against it. For until this persuasion take such place in us as that it possesses all our senses, we shall always waver in uncertainty. Not-

withstanding, it is to be noted that this saying of his not only is inward and secret, so that it sounds in the heart rather than in the tongue, but also is directed to God as the only witness of the same. For nothing is more difficult when we see our faith mocked at by the whole world, than to direct our talk to God alone, and to rest satisfied in this record of our conscience, *that he is our God.* And surely this after all is the true trial of faith; that though never so hideous waves rise against us, and though never so sore assaults shake us, yet to hold still to this principle, that we are under God's guardianship, and may freely converse with him on this wise, *Thou art our God.*

15 *My times are in, &c.*] That he might with the greater alacrity commit his salvation to God, he premises that through trust in his protection his mind runs not upon the casual and blind issues of things which men commonly fear. For it is as if he had said, Lord, in thy power is the determination and appointment of my life and death. And yet I think him not to have used the plural number for nought, but rather to note the variety of chances wherewith the life of man is harassed. For it seems to be frigid to expound this word *times* of the term of life, as though David had meant no more than that his time or his days had been in God's hand. Therefore I doubt not but David, considering the sundry revolutions and the many dangers that hang continually over us, and the many and unlooked-for chances that betide us from time to time, does nevertheless rest himself quietly upon God's providence, because he believes it to be the arbiter both of good fortune and of bad. First, we see how he not only calls God the governor of the world in general, but also affirms his life to be in his hand; and that not simply, but by what means soever it happen to be tossed amidst all changes and chances, it is always laid up in God's hand: and hereupon he grounds his prayer that he may be preserved out of the hand of his enemies.

16 *Make thy countenance, &c.*] We have said heretofore, and we shall see in many places hereafter, that this manner of speaking is taken from the common apprehension of men, who are of opinion that God regards them not except he shew that he hath a care of them by the effect and deed. For afflictions hide the countenance of God, just as clouds obscure the brightness of the sun. David therefore requests that God would, by his present help, make it manifest to him that he stands in his grace and favour; which was not so easy to discern in the mist of affliction. Howbeit, he is said to shew the light of his countenance upon us two ways; either when he openeth his eyes to regard our affairs, or when he

sheweth his favour to us: indeed these two go together; or rather, the one depends upon the other. But in the former saying, according to the understanding of our flesh, there is attributed changeableness to God, which properly agreeth not with him. And the second manner of speech expresses that the eyes of us, rather than the eyes of God, are shut and dull-sighted, as long as he seemeth not to regard our miseries. By the word *preserve* he shews what he meant before: and because, there was then no way of safety to be seen; he heartens himself to hope for it, by setting God's goodness before his eyes.

17 *Lord, let me not be ashamed.*] He goes on with his prayer; and that he may conceive the more hope, he sets himself against his enemies; for it had been doubly unreasonable, for those to escape scot-free, whose wickedness provoked God's wrath openly; and for a guiltless person, that rested upon God, to be disappointed and made a laughing-stock. Now we perceive what the comparison implies. Moreover, instead of hope or trust, now there is put invocation, and for good cause. For needs must he flee unto God, and direct his petitions and cryings unto him, whosoever leans upon his providence. *To keep silence in the grave*, implies as much as that the ungodly should be restrained by death from doing any more harm. And silence is opposed as well to deceitful and treacherous practices, as outrageous insolence. And therefore soon after, in the next verse, he adds; *Let the lips of lying be made dumb;* under which expression I take him to comprehend as well craftiness, false colours to persuade, and slanders, as inflated arrogance; for he says that they speak hardly or churlishly against the righteous, yea, and that in pride and disdainfulness. For what made David's enemies so bold in lying, was their froward conceit, which almost always breeds scornfulness. For it cannot lightly be, but that he must needs disdainfully despise others, whosoever takes more upon him than he ought.

19 How great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, and performed to them that trust in thee, even before the sons of men.

20 Thou shalt shroud them under the covert of thy countenance, thou shalt hide them in thy tabernacle from the pride of man, and from the strife of tongues.

21 Blessed be the Lord, for he hath made his goodness wonderful towards me in a fortified city.

19 *How great is, &c.*] In this verse he cries out that God is gracious and bountiful to his servants, far above the reach of our understanding. For goodness is taken here for his affection: and the interrogation is not without a force. For David says not simply, that God is good; but he is ravished with wonderment in considering the goodness which he had felt. For no doubt but his experience made him burst out into these words, because he had been delivered from his miseries by miracle and means unlooked for. Therefore by his example, he wills all men to mount above the reach of their own mind, that they may promise themselves much more, and look for much more at God's hand than man's reason can conceive. He says that God's goodness is laid up for his servants, because it is their peculiar treasure: for although it extend itself in various ways to the worldly and unworthy, and is set before them indifferently, yet it displays itself much more plenteously and manifestly towards the faithful, because they only use all God's benefits to their salvation. Besides, although God *suffer his sun to rise upon the righteous and unrighteous,* Matt. v. 45, yea and shew himself bounteous even to the brute beasts; yet he evinces not himself verily and substantially a father, to any but to his servants. Wherefore, not unfitly is the goodness of God said to be laid up for the faithful, whom he vouchsafeth to pursue more closely and more familiarly with his favour. Some more subtly understand God's goodness to be laid up, because God oft-times exercising his children with the cross and with miseries, hideth his favour from them, and yet for all that forgetteth them not. Notwithstanding, it is more likely that it should be taken for a treasure laid up in store; unless perchance it like them to refer it to the experience of the godly; because they only, as I have said, reap the fruit of God's bounteousness; whereas the brutish dulness of the ungodly hinders them that they cannot acknowledge God for a bounteous Father, no not even when they glut themselves with his good things. And so it happens that God's goodness filleth and possesseth all parts of the world, and yet is commonly unknown. But the antithesis between the faithful and the aliens will open the meaning of the prophet more certainly. For as a provident man will in suchwise be liberal to all men, as that he will not defraud his children or household, nor waste his own house by spending lavishly; even so, although God be beneficial to

aliens, yet knoweth he how to reserve to his children that which pertains to them by right of inheritance. Austin unfitly proves by these words, that they who, being without faith, are in dread of God's judgment, taste not of his goodness. And his error is exposed more clearly in the next member, where David avouches that God himself hath manifested before the world, that he is endued with inestimable goodness towards his servants, to provide for their welfare beforehand. Whereby we gather that he treats not here of everlasting blissfulness, which is laid up for the godly in heaven; but of the helps and benefits that belong to the preservation of this present life; which he avouches to be so apparent, that even the very heathenish sort, are forced to be eyewitnesses of them. For although the world pass over all God's benefits with closed eyes, and especially are ignorant of his fatherly care towards the saints; yet it is certain, that there shine forth daily such proofs thereof, that even the reprobates cannot be ignorant of it, saving so far forth as they quench the light offered unto them. Therefore doth David truly avouch that God putteth the records of his goodness towards the faithful, in such-wise before the sons of men, as that it may be certainly known that he is not served unadvisedly or to no purpose.

20 *Thou shalt shroud them.*] In this part he commends especially God's grace, in that it defends and maintains the faithful from all harm. For inasmuch as Satan assaults their welfare continually, and by innumerable means, and the greater part of the world is set against them, it must needs be that they are in hazard of many harms. Therefore, unless God shrouded them with his hand, and came up to succour them from time to time, their case were most miserable. He alludes to the same hiding whereof he made mention a little before. Although at the first sight the metaphor seem somewhat of the harshest, yet it expresses most aptly, that the only thing whereby the faithful are preserved in safety, is that God respecteth them. And therefore the efficacy of God's providence is gloriously exalted by this commendation, that it alone suffices to repulse all kind of harm, and with the beams thereof dazzles the eyes of all the wicked, and weakens their hands. To some it seems that the prophet alludes to the sanctuary; which opinion, although I reject not, yet I think it not to be sufficiently supported. And he says that the faithful are hidden from the pride of men, and from the strife of tongues. For if God bridle not the reprobates, we know with what furious outrage they dare to rush against the good and simple sort. But although their lust and pride be unbridled, yet, lest

they might do the good any harm, God by wondrous means casteth a shadow upon them from the brightness of his countenance. Some translate the word רִיכְסִים, *conspiracies*, and some translate it *naughtiness*, but upon no reason; neither does the etymology of the word agree to it, because it is not derived from heaving up. To pride is added strife of tongues, because that, although the children of God have cause to be afraid of the cruelty of their enemies, yet their envenomed railing beats it, which David had too much trial of. Considering, then, that we ought to be more careful of our innocence than of our life, let us learn so to follow righteousness, that upon trust of God's defence we may despise all slanders. And let us always bear in mind that it is the peculiar charge of God to rescue his servants from wrongful reproaches.

21 *Blessed be the Lord.*] He applies to himself personally the general sentences which he had alleged, and he declares that the goodness of God was wonderful in saving his life. And, forasmuch as he speaks of the help which came unto him suddenly and beyond all expectation, when he was most in trouble and at the last cast, the interpreters judge aright, who supply the sentence with a word denoting similitude, thus: *As in a fortified city.* For whereas David lay open to all blows, and was exposed to all injuries, he boasted that in this his nakedness and destitution, God's help stood him in better stead, than a well fortified city or an impregnable fortress.

22 And I said in my fear; I am cast out from the sight of thine eyes; yet nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my prayer when I cried unto thee.

23 O love the Lord, all ye meek of his; the Lord preserveth the faithful, and rewardeth him plenteously that behaveth himself proudly.

24 Behave yourselves manfully, and the Lord shall strengthen your heart, all ye that trust in the Lord.

22 *And I said.*] David confesses, in this verse, that by his distrust he had deserved to be forsaken and cast away from God, so that he should have perished. Truly this was a disgraceful thing before men; but, the better to set forth God's grace, he hesitates not to publish the shame of his own fault. Nearly the same confession he will repeat in Ps. cxvi; *I said in my haste, all men are liars.* I know that the word חָפַז is translated by some for *flight*, as though David, fleeing death, had been stricken with this fear, be-

cause he was unable to withstand. But I rather refer it to disquietude of mind. Therefore, whether one translate it *haste*, or *fear*, he means that he was, as it were, so haled away headlong, that he thought himself neglected of God. And this *hastiness* is set as a contrary against calm and settled reason, because, although David were stricken with fear, yet he yielded not, as though this persuasion had been fixed in his mind. For we know that the faithful are often disquieted with fear, and, as it were, driven headlong with the heat of impatience, or with their over-hasty requests; but yet, afterwards, they come to themselves again. Now, then, that David's faith was not altogether banished from him by this temptation, appears by the context, for he adds forthwith that his prayers were heard. But if his faith had been quenched, he could not have conceived any earnest affection to pray. Wherefore this lapse was only through haste. Now if extravagant hastiness of thought was able to carry the holy prophet of God, and a man that was adorned with such excellence, into despair, how great cause is there for us to be afraid lest we should quail and take a deadly fall. And although this confession, as we have said, pertains to the amplifying of God's grace; yet in the second member David shews sufficiently, that, although his faith were shaken, yet was it not plucked up by the root, because he ceased not in the meanwhile to pray. And the saints often wrestle after this manner with their own distrustfulness, that they may partly gather courage, and lift up themselves to praying. And the weakness of the flesh hinders not, but that when they are in a manner thrown down, they may shew themselves unwearied champions to God. Now although David resisted stoutly, yet he acknowledges himself unworthy of God's grace, which he, after a sort, kept off by his own doubting. For the particle אכן is in this place taken adversatively; namely, that David was preserved without desert, because God's immeasurable goodness strove with David's unbelief. As, however, it is a sign of affirmation among the Hebrews, I thought good to translate it *yet nevertheless*. And I have no doubt he matches it as a contrary against the sundry temptations wherewith it is likely that his mind was tossed hither and thither.

23 *O love the Lord.*] In my judgment, he does not here exhort the godly to the fear and awe of God, as many suppose, but only encourages them to confidence; as if he should bid them give themselves wholly unto God, to cast all their hope upon him, and to rest altogether in him, that they seek not any other. For whence comes it that our own fond devices delight us, but because God is not, to our

taste, as it were meet he should be; and because all our thoughts are not fixed on him? Wherefore this lovingness contains the full sum of all that can be wished. By nature, all men covet to be in good and happy state; but while the greater part is so overtaken with the enticements of the world, that they love leasings and deceitfulness, scarce the hundredth person applies his mind to God. The reason that is added immediately, confirms this exposition. For the prophet exhorts the *meek* to love God, because he preserveth the faithful. And therefore it is as if he should bid them hold themselves contented with his defence. By the way, he warns them that they must labour for a right conscience, and cherish innocence, because God promiseth to be the defender of such as are upright and faithful. On the contrary part, he avouches him to render plenteous reward to the proud, lest, when we see the world run on their side for a time, wicked rivalry might provoke us, or at least their haughtiness might break us and dispirit us, while they think they may do what they list. The sum, then, is this: Although the ungodly laugh in their sleeve, while they run riot in their own wickedness, and that the faithful stand in great fear and perplexity, yet give you yourselves over unto God, and lean upon his grace, for he will always defend the faithful, and render the proud the reward that they have deserved. In this particle, על יתר, the translators agree not. Some translate *pride*, in this sense: God shall recompense those that behave themselves proudly, after their pride. Others interpret it, to *the full measure*, because יתר signifies *the residue* or *remnant*, for which I have put *plenteously*. Some understand it, unto their children and children's children that shall remain of their seed. Howbeit, as the same word is often taken for *excellence*, I doubt not but that the prophet sportively taunts the proud, who surmise their own excellence to be to themselves not only as good as a shield, but also as good as an invincible fortress against God. Therefore as their own power blinds or bewitches them, so that they vaunt themselves without limit or measure against such as are abject and feeble, the prophet says elegantly, that they are rewarded plenteously for the haughtiness wherewith they are puffed up.

24 *Behave yourselves manfully.*] To the same purpose pertains this exhortation. For this constancy which he enjoins, is founded in that love of God, by which, taking our leave of all enticements, we embrace the welfare which he hath promised, with all our heart. Yet is it not for nought that he makes mention of manliness and constancy; because when a man has once settled himself in God, he must needs

frame and arm himself to bear out many assaults of Satan. The first, therefore, is to yield ourselves quietly to the protection and guardianship of God, and that the taste of his goodness may possess all our senses; and secondly, that being furnished with constancy and unwearied strength, we may stand from time to time in a readiness for new encounters. As, however, no man would of his own power be able to abide the encounter, David wills us to hope and request the spirit of fortitude at God's hand, which is a point particularly worthy to be noted. For hereby we gather, that when God's spirit warneth us to consider ourselves, he weigheth not what each man's ability is, nor measureth men's services by their own power; but rather kindleth us to prayer, that God, who only is able, may correct our default.

PSALM XXXII.

David having well and in good earnest experienced how miserable a thing it is to feel God's hand heavy on account of sin, cries out that the chief and only point of blessed life is, that God, taking away man's guiltiness, accepteth him freely into his favour. And after he has given thanks for pardon obtained, he allures others into the fellowship of this blessedness, the means to obtain which, he prescribes by his own example.

[*An Instruction of David.*]

1 Blessed are they whose unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose transgression is covered.

2 Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth no sin, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

The title of this Psalm gives some taste of the subject of it. Some think that the word משכיל is taken out of the seventh verse; but more truly was it attached to the Psalm in consideration of the whole narration. For after long and horrible torments, at what time God had vexed David very sore by shewing him tokens of his wrath; at length obtaining favour, he applies this lesson to the benefit of himself and the whole church, to instruct himself and others in the chief point of salvation. For seeing it cannot be but that all men must either miserably be in fear, until they are persuaded, for a certainty that God is reconciled to them, or else, which is worse, forgetting themselves and God, lie still in deadly lethargy; he teaches us that felicity is not to be

found elsewhere than in free forgiveness of sins. For neither can there be anything more miserable, than for a man to have God against him, neither may God otherwise be favourable to us than by pardoning our sins of his fatherly lovingkindness.

1 *Blessed are they.*] He bursts forth into this outcry as well from the fervent affection of his heart as his earnest bethinking of himself. For whereas wellnigh all the whole world, turning away their thoughts from God's judgment, bring upon themselves deadly forgetfulness, and besot themselves in false delights; as David was forced by the fear of God's wrath to betake himself to seek mercy; so also awakens he others with a shrill and loud voice; pronouncing those only to be blessed with whom God is well pleased, so that he may acknowledge them for his children to whom he might justly be an enemy. And although some are blinded with hypocrisy and pride, and some with gross contempt of God, so that they have no care at all to seek forgiveness, yet all confess that they have need of forgiveness; and surely there is not any man, whose conscience accuses him not before the judgment-seat of God, and goads him with many compunctions. This confession therefore, is extorted even from heathenish men, by nature itself; namely, that because no man is perfect, all men have need of forgiveness, and that we are then only in a good state, when God pardoneth our sins. But meanwhile, hypocrisy overcasts many men with a mist, and the froward recklessness of the flesh deludes many, so that they are touched either with none, or, but with a cold feeling of God's wrath. And in addition, there is a twofold error; first, that all men make light of their own sins, and consider not the hundredth part how much they are liable to God's wrath. And secondly, they invent vain expiations wherewith to deliver themselves from guilt, and to purchase God's favour. And so in all ages, it has been a settled opinion everywhere, that although all men are attainted with sin, yet are they also therewithal garnished with deserts, which may purchase them favour with God; and again, that although they provoke God's wrath by their offences, yet they have cleansings and satisfactions at hand, wherewith to acquit themselves. And this illusion of Satan's reigns universally in the Papists, Turks, Jews, and other heathen nations. Therefore, whosoever is not carried away with furious madness in popery, he will admit this opinion, that men are in a wretched state except God deal mercifully with them in not laying their sins to their charge. But David has proceeded further; putting the whole life of man under the wrath and

curse of God, saving so far as God vouchsafeth to receive them to him of his own free grace; of which, the Spirit that spake by David, is an assured interpreter, and witness to us by the mouth of Paul to the Romans in the fourth chapter and the sixth verse. If Paul had not used this record, his readers had never come to the natural meaning of the prophet; as the papists, who, although they chant in their chaples, *Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven*, yet pass it over, as some common saying of small weight. But with Paul is the full definition of righteousness; as if the prophet had said that then only men are blessed, when being freely reconciled to God, they are accounted for righteous. This blessedness, therefore, which David commends, brings the deserts of all men to nought, and utterly overthrows the righteousness of works. For the invention of partial righteousness, wherewith the papists beguile themselves and others, is mere folly. For not even among those that want the light of the heavenly doctrine, is there any to be found so crazy as to take upon himself perfect righteousness; which appears plainly by the cleansings, washings, and other means of appeasing God, which have always been in use among all nations. And yet, in the meanwhile, they hesitate no more to obtrude upon God their own virtues, than if they had purchased a great part of blessedness by their own power. But David appoints a far other order; namely, that in seeking happiness, men should begin at this principle, that is, that they cannot creep into God's favour unless he pardon them freely, and vouchsafe them his good will, who otherwise were worthy of everlasting destruction. And justly does David avouch, that all men are utterly wretched and accursed if mercy be taken away. For seeing that all men are naturally given only to evil, sure it is that all their whole life is hateful and loathsome unto God, till they are born anew. Again; since no man's work, even after regeneration, can please God without forgiveness, they must needs be excluded from hope of salvation, and so shall nothing remain unto them but trembling of heart. It seems a hard saying to the papists, that the works of the saints are unworthy of reward, because they are besprinkled with spots. But herein they betray their gross ignorance, that they, by their own wit, do measure the judgment of God, in comparison whereof the very brightness of the stars is dark. Therefore let this doctrine stand fast, that seeing we are not accounted righteous before God, otherwise than by free remission of sins; the same free remission of sins is the gate of everlasting salvation, and therefore they only are blessed, who lean upon God's mercy.

For we must bear in mind that opposition which I have noted between the faithful, who, embracing the forgiveness of sins, acquiesce in the mere favour of God, and all others, that scorn to flee to the sanctuary of grace. Moreover, whereas David thrice urges the same thing, it is no vain repetition. It was evident enough of itself, that the man is blessed, whose wickedness is forgiven; but how hard it is to be persuaded, so that it might abide thoroughly fixed in men's hearts, experience shews. The greater part, as I have told you, being entangled in their own enticements, drive far from them, as much as in them lies, the terrors of conscience, and all fear of God's wrath. And although they would fain have God's favour, yet do they rather shun his sight, than seek his grace sincerely, and from the bottom of their heart. But they whom God awakeneth indeed, so that they are touched with the lively feeling of their own misery, are troubled with continual unquietness, so that it is a hard matter to appease their minds. They taste, indeed, God's mercy, and endeavour to take hold of it; but yet, for all that, manifold assaults do from time to time either abash them or make them stagger. For these two, he insists with many words upon avouching the forgiveness of sins; namely, that he may raise up such as are fallen asleep, inspire the thoughtless with carefulness, and alarm the torpid; and then, that he may quiet the fearful and troubled minds with assured and steadfast confidence. To the former sort, this doctrine may be applied thus: What mean ye, O ye wretches? Though one or two prickings move you not, though an ordinary acknowledgment of your sins be not enough to strike fear into you, yet what a frowardness is it to sleep soundly still, when you are overwhelmed with an immeasurable heap of them: and this repetition makes not a little to the comforting and strengthening of the weak and fearful. For seeing that doubts recur from time to time it were not enough for them to get the upperhand in one encounter only. Therefore, lest despair might swallow them up among the sundry assaults wherewith they are troubled, the Holy Ghost confirmeth and ratifieth the remission of sins with many words. Furthermore, it is requisite to weigh what the particular expressions import. Surely, the forgiveness, whereof he treats here, agrees not with satisfactions. For God, in releasing, or taking away, and also in hiding and not imputing sins, freely forgives them. Therefore the papists, by thrusting in their satisfactions and works of supererogation, as they term them, bereave themselves of this blessedness. Besides this, David extends these words to full forgiveness. And therefore out of season comes here

the distinction of the penalty, and the fault, whereby the papists diminish the forgiveness one half. Now at length is to be seen to what persons this happiness belongs; which thing is easy to be gathered by the circumstance of the time. For when David said that he was blessed through the only mercy of God, he was not an alien from the church; but rather he had profited above many others in the fear and service of God, and in holiness of life, and had exercised himself in all the duties of godliness. After these proceedings, God so exercised him, that he rested the prow and stern of his salvation in reconciliation with God. Neither is it for nought that Zacharias in his song, Luke i. 77, calls it the *knowledge of salvation*, to hold to the forgiveness of sins. Then although a man excel never so much in holiness, yet must he think himself to be still far off from the perfection of righteousness, and not trust to anything else than the mere mercy of God. Whereby it appears that they are grossly infatuated who think that the forgiveness of sins is but an entrance to righteousness. For seeing that the faithful daily endanger themselves with many faults, it will profit them nothing at all to have once entered the way, unless God pursue them with the same grace, even unto the last point of their life. If any man object, that in some places they are called *blessed* who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways, who are sound of heart, &c., the answer is easy; that forasmuch as the perfect fear of God, the keeping of the law, and soundness of heart, may nowhere be found, whatsoever the scripture says anywhere of blessedness, is grounded solely upon the free favour of God, whereby he reconcileth us unto him.

2 *In whose spirit there is no guile.*] In this portion he discerns the faithful as well from the hypocrites as from the dull despisers, both of whom neither have regard of this felicity, nor can know the means of coming by it. The wicked find themselves guilty in their own consciences, but yet their own filthiness pleases them well enough; they harden themselves in shamelessness, they make but a jest of threatenings, or at least they wallow in deceitful flattery, lest they might be constrained to come forth into the sight of God. Therefore, although they burned inwardly with the feeling of their own misery, or are vexed with unseen torments, yet with their froward forgetfulness they stifle all fear of God. As for the hypocrites, if at any time their conscience sting them, they sooth their pain with delusive medicines. If God cite them to his judgment-seat, they set I know not what phantoms before them for their defence, and they are never without curtains, wherewith to keep the

light out of their hearts. All these men are hindered by their own inward wiliness, that they cannot seek felicity in the fatherly love of God. Furthermore, many of them either press frowardly before God, or swell with proud presumption, so that they dream themselves happy whether God will or no. David therefore means that no man tastes of what value forgiveness of sins is, before guile be wiped out of his heart. Moreover, what he means by this term *guile*, one may gather from what I have spoken; whosoever then examines not himself before God, but rather, shunning God's judgment, either shrouds himself in the dark, or covers himself with leaves, he deals guilefully both with himself and with God. So is it no marvel though he refuse a remedy, since he feels not his disease. Of this guile, the two sorts which I have touched upon are to be noted. Now although many are not grown so hardhearted, but that they are touched with some fear of God and desire of his grace, yet, by the way, they either indulge themselves, or else are moved but coldly to seek forgiveness. Hence it comes to pass, that they perceive not yet how inestimable a happiness it is, to stand in God's favour. Such a one was David for a time, when deceitful recklessness crept upon him to darken his mind that he raised not himself to look after this felicity. Of this same disease are the saints oftentimes sick. Therefore if we covet to enjoy this felicity which David sets before us, we must take good heed that Satan possess not our hearts with guiles, and so take from us the feeling of our own wretchedness, in which all must needs pine away, that seek subterfuges.

3 When I held my peace my bones consumed, and when I howled out all the day long.

4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; and my greenness is turned into the droughts of summer.

3 *When I held my peace.*] He confirms, by his own experience, the sentence he had set forth: namely, that being humbled by the hand of God, he perceived that nothing is more miserable than to be out of his favour. By which words he gives us to understand, that this doctrine cannot be received aright until God have exercised us with the feeling of his wrath. Neither speaks he of a limited examination only; but he declares that he was utterly brought under with extreme rigour. And certainly, wonderful in this behalf is not only the slothfulness, but also the hardihood

of our flesh. Therefore if we are not drawn by forcible means, we shall never make haste to seek reconciliation with God so earnestly as we ought to do. To be brief; the prophet, by the example of himself, teaches that we never perceive how great a happiness it is to have the favour of God, until we have thoroughly felt how dreadful God's displeasure is, by being inwardly exercised with grievous encounters of temptations. And he says that whether he held his peace, or went about to disburden his grief by crying and roaring out, his bones always consumed: as if he should have said, that all his strength was clean withered. Whence it follows, that whithersoever the sinner turn himself, and howsoever he is minded, yet it eases not his malady, nor profits him at all, until he is come again into God's favour. For it oftentimes happens that they who chafe upon the bit, and swallow up and suppress their sorrow inwardly, are pinched with sorest grief, and yet afterwards are carried away with a sudden rage, and the force of their grief bursts out with greater violence the longer they restrain themselves. By the term *silence*, he betokens not insensibility or blockishness, but an affection which is a mean between sufferance and stubbornness, allied both to the vice and to the virtue; for his bones would not have been consumed as it were by age, but through sore vexations of mind, and yet his holding of his peace could not be said to proceed from hope or obedience, because it eased not his misery at all.

4 *For day and night.*] In this verse he shews more evidently whence his great heaviness sprang; that is, because he felt God's hand to be sore against him. For of all miseries, the greatest is to be so pressed with God's hand, that the sinner feels himself to have to do with such a judge that his displeasure and strictness contain in them innumerable deaths, besides eternal death. Hereupon David complains that his moisture was dried up, not only because he simply considered his own miseries, but also because he knew the cause and fountain of them. For then fails all the courage of man, when God appeareth as a judge, and bringeth him low, by putting forth the tokens of his displeasure. Then is fulfilled this saying of Isaiah, xl. 7, *The blade is dried up, and the flower withered away, because the breath of the Lord hath blown upon it.* And he says it was no common kind of chastisement, whereby he learned to fear God's wrath indeed, for the hand of the Lord ceased not to be heavy upon him day nor night. Surely he had been framed, even of a child, as well to the fear of God by secret instinct of the Spirit, as unto godliness by instruction. And yet to the learning of this wisdom, so insufficient were the rudiments wherein he

had been instructed, that like a raw scholar, he had need to be sent to school again in the midst of his course. Nay rather, when he had now by long custom inured himself to bewailing his sins, he was pulled back again to his daily exercises; whereby we may gather, how late it is ere men amend when they are once fallen, and also how slow they are to obey, till God beat them with many stripes, and chastise them continually more and more. If any man ask concerning David, whether he became hardened at the stripes which he knew to be laid upon him by the hand of God, the answer is to be fetched from the text; namely, that he was held down and fettered in perplexity of sorrow, and haled sundry ways with lingering torments, till he was well tamed and made meek, which is the beginning of seeking remedy; whereby we gather again, that the chastisements wherein God seemeth cruel towards us, are not repeated without cause, nor his hand made heavy without cause, until our pride submit itself, which we know to be untameable, unless it be compelled with the sorest stripes.

5 I have acknowledged my sin unto thee; and mine unrighteousness have I not hidden; I said, I will confess my wickedness against myself unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the guiltiness of my sin. Selah.

6 Therefore shall every meek person pray unto thee in the time of finding; for truly in the floods of many waters they shall not come nigh him.

7 Thou art my hiding-place; thou shalt keep me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.

5 *I have acknowledged, &c.*] Now the prophet describes the issue of his misery; that the means of attaining the happiness whereof he has made mention, may be set forth in readiness for all men. Therefore when the feeling of God's wrath did miserably vex and torment him, his only relief was to condemn himself unfeignedly before God, and to flee humbly to crave forgiveness. He says not simply that his sins came to his remembrance, for that befel Cain and Judas, but nothing to their profit; because, when the consciences of the reprobates misgive them, they cease not to torment themselves, and to fret against God; yea, and though their conscience bring them to judgment whether they will or no,

yet would they willingly hide themselves. But here is described a far other manner of acknowledging sins; that is, when the sinner resorts willingly to God, because he reposes the hope of his welfare not on stubbornness, or hypocrisy, but craving of pardon. For this willing confession is always joined with faith, for otherwise the sinner will always seek lurking-places, to escape the sight of God. And David's words shew openly, that he came forth into God's presence unfeignedly and with all his heart, so that he concealed nothing. For whereas he says he acknowleged his sin, and hid it not; the latter part is added after the Hebrew manner, to amplify; wherefore there is no doubt but that David, presenting himself before God, poured out all his heart. We know how the hypocrites either qualify their evil doings, or put a gloss upon them, or throw a veil over them by shuffling, in a word, never make direct confession unfeignedly and with full utterance. David denies that he was chargeable with this baseness, because without any dissimulation, he disclosed unto God whatsoever grieved him, and this he confirms by the word *said*. For whereas the reprobates are drawn by force, as if a judge should compel offenders to come to examination, he avouches himself to have come of set purpose and prompt impulse of mind: for this *saying* is nothing but bethinking himself. Whence it follows that he promised himself forgiveness through the mercy of God, lest terror should foreclose the way to a free confession. This portion, *against myself*, or *upon myself*, denotes that David omitted all pretences, whereby the most part of men unburden themselves, in transferring their fault to something else, or tracing it to some other source. David then determined to submit himself utterly to God's judgment, and to lay open his own guiltiness, that being condemned in himself, he might obtain pardon at God's hand. *And thou forgavest.* This member is set against the troublesome and sore vexations wherewith he reported himself to have been harassed, before he took hold of God's grace by faith. Howbeit, in these words he teaches, that as often as the sinner offers himself with unfeigned confession, reconciliation with God shall be ready for him. For he means not that God was placable towards him alone, but he sets forth a general lesson in the example of himself, that those in distress should not doubt of God's favour towards them, as soon as they repair to him with a right and willing mind. If any one gather hence, that repentance and confession are the cause of obtaining grace, the answer is not difficult; namely, that David treats not here of the cause, but shews the manner how the sinner reconciles himself to God. For although confession come in by the way, yet must

we pierce deeper; namely, that faith, opening our hearts and our tongues, does also itself obtain forgiveness. For it is not convenient, that everything which is required of necessity, should always be accounted as causes. If any man would have me speak more simply, David obtained forgiveness by his confessing, not because he deserved it by the very act of speaking, but because he sued humbly to his judge under the direction of faith. Moreover, seeing that the same manner of confession ought to be used among us at this day which was used in old time by the fathers under the law, that tyrannous decree of the pope is sufficiently disproved, whereby he banishes us from God, and sends us to his own chaplains.

6 *Therefore shall, &c.*] He expresses evidently, that whatsoever he has hitherto propounded in his own person, belongs in common to the children of God. Which is to be noted advisedly, because through the distrust bred in us by nature, most of us are loath and unwilling to admit God's grace to us. Hereby also we gather that he purchased not forgiveness by the act of confession, as they term it, but rather by faith and prayer. For here he declares to the godly, that the manner how to obtain it, is to resort unto prayer; which is the true sacrifice of faith. Furthermore, let us learn that in David, God gave a specimen of his own mercy; which not only extends to us all, but also shews how the atonement is to be sought. And although the universal mark is available to confirm every godly person, yet he shews at the same time that no man is put in hope of salvation otherwise than by casting himself humbly down before God, because all without exception have need of his mercy. *The time of finding*, which is added soon after, is referred by some to the ordinary and appointed hours of praying. But others, more truly in my judgment, match this place with that place of Isaiah, lv. 6, *Seek the Lord while he may be found: call upon him while he is near at hand.* Truly, it is never out of season to seek God, because we have need of his grace every moment, and he himself meeteth us of his own accord. But as slothfulness, or dulness, hinders us from seeking him, David in this place indicates the critical junctures when the faithful are stimulated by a sense of their own need. The papists have abused this place, to fetch their patron saints out of heaven; but it is a piece of senselessness unworthy of refutation. Notwithstanding, a man may see hereby, either how wickedly they have corrupted the whole scripture, or with what gross ignorance they have hallucinated even in plain matters. *In the flood of many waters.* This expression agrees with

the prophecy of Joel, *Whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved;* Joel, ii. 32. The meaning is, that although deep whirlpools of death compass us round about, yet ought we not to fear that they shall swallow us up, but rather think we shall be safe and unhurt, provided we have recourse to God's mercy by faith. It is therefore a circumstance forcibly impressed upon us, that the faithful shall be assured of salvation even in death, provided they betake themselves to the sanctuary of God's favour. For by the term *flood*, are betokened any manner of dangers, wherefrom there appear no means of escape. At length he turns himself to thanksgiving: and although he commend God's grace but with few words, yet is there much force hid in that brevity. For, first, he denies that there is any other haven of welfare than God himself; and, secondly, he assures himself that God will be his faithful keeper hereafter. For I willingly keep still the future tense of the verb, which some without reason turn into the preter tense. Notwithstanding, he thinks not that he shall be free from all tribulations, but he sets God's defence against them. Lastly, whatsoever adversity shall betide him, he assures himself that God will be his deliverer. For by the word *compass*, he indicates manifold and sundry sorts of deliverance: as if he should say, he should be bound to God innumerable ways, so that he should have thence most plentiful matter for praising God. We see by the way, how, according to his custom, he offers his service of thankfulness to God, putting *songs of deliverance* for *help*.

8 I will instruct thee, and teach thee in what way thou mayest walk; and I will watch over thee with mine eye.

9 Be not as horse and mule, which have no understanding; thou shalt bind his jaws with bit and bridle, that they kick not against thee.

10 Many are the sorrows of the ungodly: but whoso trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall embrace him round about.

11 Be glad ye righteous, and rejoice in the Lord; sing all ye that are upright of heart.

8 *I will instruct thee, &c.*] That his exhortation may have the more force, he directs his discourse to each man severally. For what is spoken, pierces the more easily into men's minds, when each applies the doctrine peculiarly to himself. Now

considering that the way of life is shewn here to all the children of God; great heed is to be taken that no man deviate the least from it. And we may learn by this place, that we are reconciled to God, upon condition that every man should endeavour to make his brethren partakers of the same benefit. And he declares his solicitude the better by fixing his eye upon them. By the way it is to be considered, that whosoever are careful about our welldoing, are appointed by the Lord, as guides of our way, whereby it appears how fatherly he provideth for us.

9 *Be not as horse, &c.*] Now he declares briefly the general effect of the counsel which he premised that he would give them. For he exhorts all men to learn with quietness, and to put off stubbornness, and clothe themselves in the spirit of meekness. And wisely does he admonish the godly to correct their hardness. For if we were heedful of God's corrections, as it becomes us, every man would emulously make haste to seek his favour. But now whence comes that great slowness in all men, but that we are either dullheaded, or else restive? David, by likening all the wilful sort to brute beasts, strikes shame into them, and at the same time tells them that they avail nothing by kicking against the pricks. Men, says he, can tell how to break the fierceness of horses with bridles and bits; what think they then that God will do, when he finds them intractable?

10 *Many are the, &c.*] He pronounces without any figure of speech what is the state which awaits the rebellious and stiffnecked. He had said before that God wanted not bridles and bits wherewith to restrain their frowardness; and now he adds that there shall be no end or measure of their miseries until they are utterly consumed. Although, then, God spare us for a time, yet let this denunciation make us afraid; so that our escaping unpunished for a time harden us not, and our prosperity which God curseth, deceive us not; so as not to reflect on these treasured sorrows which God menaceth to all the reprobates. And as he said that God is armed with innumerable plagues against the reprobates, so again, he adds that God is stored with infinite goodness, wherewith to succour all those that are his. The sum is, that there is no other remedy for our miseries but to humble ourselves under the hand of God, and to ground our welfare upon his mercy alone; and that they who lean upon God shall be blessed in all points; because on what side soever Satan assault us, there will the Lord meet him with his protecting power.

11 *Be glad.*] After David has shewn how true happiness is ready and held out to all the godly, not without cause he

exhorts them to gladness. And he bids them rejoice in the Lord; as if he should say, there was no cause why they might not assure themselves of God's favour, who offereth himself so gently and courteously for reconciliation. By the way, we may note that this is an incomparable fruit of faith, which also Paul commends; namely, that the consciences of the godly, being quiet and cheerful, enjoy spiritual gladness. For wheresoever faith flourishes, this holy rejoicing will follow. But because the world's own wickedness is a hindrance to it, so that it cannot come to the partaking of this joy, therefore David speaks only to the righteous, whom he calls also *upright of heart*, that we may know that the beauty of outward righteousness, which pleases men so well, is nothing worth before God. But how calls he them righteous, whose whole happiness consists in the free mercy of God, while he imputes not their sins unto them? I answer, that none other are accepted into favour, than such as are dissatisfied with themselves in their sins, and amend with their whole heart; not that they earn themselves forgiveness by their repentance, but because faith can never be separated from the spirit of regeneration. For when they have begun to give themselves to God, he accepteth the right disposition of their heart in as ample manner as if it were sound and perfect. For faith not only reconciles a man to God, but also sanctifies whatsoever is yet imperfect in him; so that he, who by no desert of his own could have purchased so great a benefit to himself, may be made righteous through the free forbearance of God.

PSALM XXXIII.

David, or whosoever was the author of this Psalm, in order to stir up the faithful to praise God, grounds his argument upon his general providence, wherewith he upholdeth, maintaineth, and governeth the whole world. And afterwards he sets forth his fatherly loving-kindness towards his chosen people, shewing at the same time how needful a thing it is for the godly to be cherished with his especial care.

1 Rejoice, ye righteous, in the Lord: praise is comely in the rightful.

2 Praise the Lord upon the harp: sing unto him upon the viol, and instrument of ten strings.

3 Sing unto him a new song; sing lustily with joyfulness.

4 For the word of the Lord is rightful; and all his works are in faithfulness.

Rejoice, ye righteous.] He speaks to the faithful or righteous by name, because they only are meet proclaimers of God's glory. For it is not possible for the faithless, that never tasted of God's goodness, to praise him from the bottom of their heart; and God will not have his name touched with their filthy tongues. But it will appear better from the text itself, why this exhortation agrees properly with the faithful only. And many expound the latter member that *praise is comely in the rightful*, thus; because, if the ungodly or the hypocrites address themselves to the same, it will redound rather to the reproach and dishonour of God, than to his praise; yea rather, they do but blaspheme his holy name. And it is truly said, as I have taught already, that God purposely createth himself a church by free adoption in the world, to this end, that his name may be duly praised by authentic witnesses. Nevertheless, the natural sense is, that praise well becomes the righteous, because there is nothing wherein they may occupy themselves better. And surely, since God by his continual benefits ministereth matter to them to set forth his glory; and that his immeasurable goodness is, as we have seen elsewhere, laid up as a peculiar treasure for them; it were a foul shame, and utterly against reason, for them to omit speaking of the praises of God. The whole of it comes to this; that the chief study wherein it becomes the righteous to be occupied, is to publish among men the righteousness, goodness, and might of God, the knowledge whereof they carry about them fixed in their minds. Whereas, following other interpreters, I have translated it that *praise is comely*, it may also be fitly translated *desirable*, from אוה which signifies *to wish* or *desire*. And surely, seeing that God allureth the faithful so sweetly, it is meet that they should be borne along by every impulse of the mind to sing his praises. It is to be noted that when the prophet has denoted the righteousness under the name of rightness, wherein is comprehended the inward uncorruptness of the mind, soon after he defines what true righteousness is.

2 *Praise the Lord.*] There is no doubt that in this verse he expresses the vehemence and earnestness of his affection in praising God, when he wills that musical instruments should be applied to that use. For he would have nothing omitted by the faithful, that may kindle their minds and senses to set forth the praises of God. For although God's glory be not properly set forth but by plain utterance of

speech; yet is it not for nought that he has added these helps wherewith the faithful are wont to stir up themselves, especially seeing he spoke to the people of old time. For there is a difference to be observed, so that we draw not to ourselves, without respect, whatsoever was commanded the Jews in old time. And I have no doubt for my part, that the playing upon cymbals, singing to the harp and the viol, and all that description of music whereof mention is made oftentimes in the Psalms, was a part of instruction under the law: I speak of the stated service of the temple. For at this day, if the faithful cheer themselves with instruments of music, I say their purpose ought to be, not to sever their mirth from the praises of God. But when they haunt their holy assemblies, I think that musical instruments are no more meet for the setting forth of God's praises, than if a man should call again unto us, burning of incense and lamps, and such other shadows of the law. Foolishly, therefore, have the papists borrowed this, as they have many other things, of the Jews. Men that are given to outward pomps, delight in such noise; but God is better pleased with the simplicity which he commendeth to us by his apostle. For Paul, 1 Cor. xiv. 16, suffers not men to praise God in the open congregation of the faithful, otherwise than in a known tongue. Certainly, the voice of man, although it be not understood of all in general, far excels all inanimate instruments. What shall we then say of chanting, which only feeds the ears with a vain sound? If any man object, that music avails greatly to the stirring up of men's minds; truly, I grant it does so, but it is always to be feared, lest some corruption should creep in, which might both defile the pure service of God, and entangle men in superstition. Moreover, seeing that the Holy Ghost warneth us expressly of the danger by the mouth of Paul; to proceed further than we have warrant there, I say is not only unadvised zeal, but also impious obstinacy.

3 *Sing unto him a new song.*] Inasmuch as he treats afterwards of the mighty works of God, and especially of the preservation of the church, it is no marvel that he enjoins them a new song; that is to say, a rare and singular song. For the nearer and the more diligently the faithful weigh God's works, the further it is reasonable that they should go in his praises. Therefore it must be no common song that he wills them to devise, to be answerable to so noble a matter. To the same purpose pertains also the second member, that they should set themselves to singing lustily. For so I translate the word הֵיטִיב, which others like better to refer to the apposite setting of the notes.

4 *For the word of the Lord is rightful.*] As I said just now, at first he sets down God's general providence whereby the whole world is ruled, and says that God so exerts his sovereign power in the whole course of his works, that the most perfect equity and faithfulness shine forth everywhere. Some will that *word* and *work* should signify the same thing. But I sever them, so that God's word should imply as much as his purpose or commandment; and his work should denote the effect and execution of the same. I confess that one meaning is repeated in diverse words, as it is in many places elsewhere. But it is no rare thing in repetitions to use a little alteration, so that one thing should be spoken diversely and many ways. The effect is, that whatsoever God determine and command is rightful; and that whatsoever he perform in very deed, it is faithful and true. By the way it is to be noted, that *the word* is not taken here for doctrine, but for the order of governing the world.

5 He loveth righteousness and judgment; the earth is full of the Lord's goodness.

6 By the Lord's word were the heavens established, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as upon a heap, and hath laid up the deep as in his treasury.

8 Let all the earth stand in fear of the Lord, let all them that dwell in the world fear him.

9 For he spake, and it was done; he commanded and it stood.

5 *He loveth righteousness and judgment.*] It is a confirmation of the former sentence; that is to say, because God of his own nature loveth righteousness and equity. Whence it follows that froward affections cannot carry him to evil purposes after the manner of men. Truly, at the first blush, this seems to be but a common and trifling commendation of God; for all men confess that God observes a most perfect rule of equity in all his works. To what purpose then, will some say, was there mention made recently of a new song, as though it had been in some unusual matter? First, it is too well known how shamefully the most part of the world shut their eyes to God's righteousness, while they either negligently pass over innumerable proofs of his provi-

dence, or else imagine them to happen by chance. Besides, there is this worse fault; that if God follow not our desires, forthwith we murmur against his righteousness; and so when this principle has been banded about in every man's mouth for a thing granted, *that God doth all things righteously;* scarce the hundredth person believes it steadfastly in his heart. Otherwise, as soon as this doctrine, *so it pleaseth God*, were delivered, every man would submit himself obediently to his government. But now, considering that men are with the utmost difficulty brought into subjection so as to acknowledge and profess God to be righteous in adversity, but faint and fall away in prosperity; it is no wonder the prophet affirms God to love righteousness that he may persuade men that he is a rightful governor. Therefore, whosoever shall have digested this doctrine thoroughly, let him know that he has profited much. Others expound it, that God loveth uprightness in men; which is true indeed, but remote from the text. For the purpose of the Holy Ghost in this place, is to maintain God's glory against the poison of ungodliness, that is deeply seated in the hearts of many men. In the second part of the verse, the prophet commends another species of virtue in God; *that the earth is full of his goodness.* Now although God's righteousness ought of right to stimulate us to set forth his renown; yet is his goodness a sharper spur, because according as each man feels him beneficial and merciful towards him, so much the more is he to worship him. Moreover, hitherto he speaks of the benefits of God, which he pours upon all mankind in general: and these the prophet declares meet us everywhere, whithersoever we turn our eyes.

6 *By the word of the Lord.*] That he may awaken us to consider God's works the more effectually, he sets before us the creation of the world itself; for until God be acknowledged the creator and maker of the world, who will believe that he regards men's affairs, and that the state of the world is governed by his wisdom and power? And the creation of the world leads us by natural consequence to the providence of God; not that all men reason so justly, or are endued with a judgment so true, as to conclude that the world is at this day maintained by the same power of God, which he once put forth in creating it, but rather the greater part surmise him to sit idly gazing out of heaven upon the things that are done on earth. But no man is duly persuaded that the world was created by God, unless he be persuaded that it is also cherished and preserved in its state by him. Wisely, therefore, and aptly, does the pro-

phet call us back to the very creation of the world, to imprint in us the certainty of God's providence in the continual order of nature. Moreover, the name of *heavens* is, by the figure synecdoche, put for the whole frame of the world; because, as is said elsewhere, we are drawn most to wonderment by beholding them: and therefore soon after he adds, *and all the hosts of them;* by which expression he means the stars and planets according to the usual manner of the scripture; for if the heavens wanted this ornament, they would be in a manner void. And in saying that the heavens were created by the word of the Lord, he advances his power the more; satisfied with his nod alone, he neither fetched help from elsewhere, nor employed much effort and labour about so beautiful and noble a work. And although the prophet have set the word of God and the breath of his mouth, as well against all outward means, as against all painfulness of labour which might be surmised in God; yet is it truly and certainly gathered hence, that the world was framed by God's eternal word, which is his only-begotten Son. The ancient doctors have employed this title with some subtilty against the Sabellians, to avouch the eternal godhead of the Holy Ghost. But it appears by other places, and especially by Is. xi. 4, that by the *breath of his mouth* is betokened Christ; for there it is said concerning Christ, *He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the ungodly.* Now as speech full of power and workfulness is allegorically called *the rod of the mouth,* so also to another end it is called *breath,* to note the difference between the speech of God and the vain sound that proceeds out of the mouth of men. Therefore, in proving the godhead of the Holy Ghost, I durst not press Sabellius with this text. Wherefore let it suffice us, that God hath so framed the world by his word, that hereby may be proved the everlasting godhead of Christ. If any one object, that they would not be distinct persons if the terms *word* and *breath* were synonymous; I answer, that the term *breath* is not put simply here, as it is in other places, in which it is manifestly distinguished from the term *word;* but the breath of his mouth is taken figuratively for the very utterance of his speech, as if it had been said, *As soon as God uttered the breath of his voice, or as soon as he uttered in word what he would have done,* the heavens were forthwith made, yea, and furnished with an incredible number and variety of stars. True it is, that this similitude is borrowed from men. But the scripture teaches often elsewhere, that the world was created by

that everlasting Word, who, being the only-begotten Son of God, appeared afterwards in the flesh.

7 *He gathered, &c.*] He does not proceed to say all that might be spoken of each several part of the world, but under one part he briefly comprehends all the rest. And in the upper face of the earth he sets forth a signal and remarkable miracle; that whereas the element of water is fluid and unstable, God gathereth it together as a solid heap, and holdeth it so at his pleasure; for physiologists confess, and experience cries aloud, that the waters are above the earth. Now, then, seeing they be thin and flowing, how comes it to pass that they shed not out themselves to overwhelm the earth, but this earth, which is in place beneath them, appears dry above them? Surely we see here that God, to provide for the welfare of mankind, hath restrained the waters with mysterious mounds, and so holdeth them pent up to this day; and the prophet declares in select terms, that they stand still at God's commandment, as if they were a heap of firm and solid matter. And not without cause does the Spirit in another place commend this proof of God's power, as in Jer. v. 22, and in Job, xxxviii. 8. In the second part of the verse he seems to repeat the same thing again, but with amplification; for God not only restraineth the immeasurable mass of waters in the sea, but also, by his wonderful and incomprehensible power, bestoweth them even in the very bowels of the earth. For whosoever shall compare the elements among themselves, will say it is against nature that the bottomless depths or immeasurable gulfs of waters should lie hid under the earth, which ought rather to overwhelm it. And here also shines forth another energy of God, that so many hollow channels and gulfs swallow not up the earth every moment; for although now and then some cities or grounds disappear in an opening of the earth, yet the body itself of the earth abides in its state.

8 *Let all the earth.*] He concludes that there is just cause why the whole world should reverently submit itself to the government of God, from whom it hath its beginning, and by whom it is preserved. For to stand in awe of the Lord, and to fear him, is but to receive his fearful authority. And it is a mark of too gross dulness, not to give heed to God's presence, of whom we have our being, and in whom our estate stands. For the prophet touches upon both of these things; that is to say, that the world was as soon as God had spoken, and that by his commandment it had some stay; for it had not been enough for it to have been created

by God's appointment, unless it were also pillared up by his power. God therefore employed no great array of means for creating the world. But to shew the immeasurable mightiness of his word,

> "He bade that straight his word might be a work."

Yea, and the very word *command* confirms what I said a little before; namely, that his speech was no other than his beck, and that to *speak* was nothing but to *command;* which, notwithstanding, must be taken so, that in this beck or commandment God's everlasting wisdom shew itself.

10 The Lord disappointeth the counsel of the heathen, and bringeth the imaginations of the people to nought.

11 The purpose of the Lord shall stand for ever; and the thoughts of his heart world without end.

12 Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord; the people whom he hath chosen for his inheritance.

10 *The Lord disappointeth.*] After he has briefly touched upon the creation of the world, he returns to the subject; namely, that the things which happen daily, are assured witnesses of the providence of God. Moreover, lest any man should marvel that the prophet here brings in God as an adversary to men, rather disappointing their devices than establishing them and bringing them to good success, he has picked out an example that was of greatest value for the comfort of the godly. For we know how many things men adventure upon continually, and what things they practise against all right and conscience, and how they endeavour to turn the world upside down with their devices, that they may tyrannously advance themselves to trample good and simple folk under their feet. Therefore, what were more miserable than we, if, impelled by passions so inordinate, they might have leave to do what they list? But when God telleth us from above, that it is his charge to disappoint whatsoever they determine, and to bring to nought whatsoever they devise, there is no reason why we should not keep ourselves in quietness, even when they bestir themselves the most tumultuously. Wherefore God is said to overthrow men's imaginations, not that he delighteth himself professedly in disappointing them, but to bridle their headiness; for they would forthwith make confusion of all things, if matters might fall out as they would have them. Yea rather, forasmuch as they cease not to

wage battle against God, to outrage equity, and vex the good and guiltless, God's defence must needs be set against their fury. Nay, seeing that the greater part of men, despising modesty, run headlong into indiscriminate licentiousness, the prophet speaks not only of several persons, but also of whole nations: as if he should say; Although men conspire among themselves, and determine to attempt this or that with great hosts, yet shall their purposes be to none effect, because it shall be no more trouble unto God to scatter a great multitude, than to restrain a few. And although it was the purpose of God to fence us with good hope against the boldness of the wicked, yet he warneth us at the same time to beware that we attempt not anything but by his command and guidance.

11 *The purpose of the Lord.*] The prophet extols God's boundless power in this wise, that he might build our faith upon the height thereof. For he commends not such a purpose as he would have us to look up at from afar and to wonder at, as being hidden from our view in heaven. But because he everywhere avouches that he loveth righteousness and truth, that he regardeth the righteous and good, and that he is minded to succour his servants when they are wrongfully oppressed, the prophet means that the same shall stand steadfast and established. And so he declares to what end God disappointeth the devices of the heathen; namely, because without discrimination they run ahead to the violation of all order. First, therefore, let us learn to look upon God's purpose in the mirror of his word; and when we shall have assured ourselves that he promiseth nothing but that which he hath determined with himself to perform, at once let us call to mind this steadiness whereof the prophet treats. But because many, yea rather whole nations, commonly endeavour to break the course thereof with innumerable impediments, let us also call to mind the former sentence, *that* when men have imagined never so many things, yet is it in the hand and pleasure of God to disappoint them. Doubtless the Holy Ghost meant to have our faith exercised in this practical knowledge, because otherwise this commendation had been but cold and fruitless. But if we shall have thoroughly persuaded ourselves that God will defend his servants, and rid them of all dangers, whosoever call upon his name, whatsoever mischief the ungodly practise against us, their endeavours and attempts shall by no means make us afraid, because, as soon as God shall have set himself against them, no wiliness will serve them to elude his purpose.

12 *Blessed are the people.*] This verse agrees aptly

with that which went before. For little would it avail to understand that which is spoken of the everlastingness of God's decree, unless the same pertained to us. The prophet, therefore, in crying out that they are blessed whom God taketh into his protection, puts us in mind that the purpose whereof he made mention just now, is not hid from us, but flourishes and is seen in the welfare of the church. And so we see, that not they that coldly speculate upon God's almightiness, but they that apply it unto their present use, do rightly know the governor of the world. Moreover, inasmuch as he places all our blessedness in having the Lord to be our God, by pointing out the fountain of God's love towards us, he comprehends in one word whatsoever things are wont to be coveted for the leading of a happy life. For that he vouchsafeth to take charge of our welfare, to cherish us under his wings, to provide for our necessities, and to aid and help us in our dangers, all depends upon his adoption. Howbeit, lest any one should think that men obtain such great goodness by their own efforts and industry, he teaches expressly that it flows out of the fountain of God's free election, that we are accounted the people of God. True it is that men were created at first in the person of Adam, on condition that they should be the children of God; but the estrangement which followed by reason of sin, deprived us of that great benefit. Therefore, till God adopt us freely again, we are all by nature wretched, and there is none other gate of happiness than that he, of his own good will, chooseth us without our deserving. Whereby it appears how stupidly they corrupt this place, who transfer that to men which the prophet assigns to God, as though men should choose God to be their heir. I confess, indeed, that the true God is discerned from idols by faith; but this principle must be borne in mind, that we have no interest at all in him, unless he prevent us with his grace.

13 The Lord looked out of heaven, and beheld all the children of Adam.

14 From the dwelling-place of his throne hath he looked out unto all the inhabiters of the earth.

15 Which fashioned their hearts together, which understandeth all the works of them.

16 A king is not saved by the multitude of his host; neither shall the giant be delivered by the abundance of his strength.

17 A horse is but a vain help; and he shall not deliver a man by his great strength.

13 *The Lord looked.*] He proceeds still with the same doctrine; that is, that human affairs are not tossed to and fro by chance, but that God directeth privily whatsoever is done. Moreover, he therefore commends God's inspection, that we might learn on the other hand to look up to his invisible providence with the eyes of faith; for although there are evident proofs thereof daily before our eyes, yet the greater part of men are blinded, and according to their own blindness forge a blind fortune; yea rather, the more richly and with the more plenteous abundance he poureth out his goodness upon us, so much the less lift we up our thoughts to him, but, inverting the due order of things, they settle immoveably upon the outward means which surround us. This unworthy dealing does the prophet rebuke, because there can no greater wrong be done to God than to shut him up in idleness in heaven; for that is as if he should lie buried in a grave. For what manner of life were God's if he had respect to nothing, and regarded nothing? Furthermore, under the term *throne*, he shews, from what is implied in it, how unreasonable a dulness it is to deprive God of feeling and understanding; for he intimates that heaven is not a palace of idle pleasures, as the epicures dream, but a princely court, from whence he exerts his sovereignty through all parts of the world. But if he have made himself a seat in the sanctuary of heaven to rule the whole world in, it follows that he in nowise neglecteth earthly affairs, but governeth them with excellent reason and wisdom.

15 *Which fashioned their hearts, &c.*] It seems that this was added for the express purpose that the faithful might persuade themselves assuredly, that by what wiles, subtilties, and crafty conveyances soever, the ungodly endeavour to avoid the sight of God, and to delve for themselves caverns, yet do God's eyes pierce into those dark retreats. And he reasons from the very creation, that it cannot be but God must call men's devices and doings to account and judgment; because though each man have intricate recesses concealed in his breast, so that they differ wondrously one from another, and there be a puzzling obscurity in so great variety; yet cannot God's eyes be dazzled or dimmed, but that he is an adequate discerner of his own work. Therefore by the adverb *together*, he means not that all men's hearts were fashioned together at one instant of time, but that all, every one of them without exception, were made in suchwise, that it is in vain for them to hide or withdraw themselves from the

knowledge of their maker. To this also may this sentence have reference; that men, by the erring devices of their own thoughts, diminish not God's authority over them, but that through his secret providence he ordereth the things which they imagine to happen by chance. For we see how, in forming vain hopes to themselves, they shift God's power hither and thither, and think not that they have need of his help, so long as they are furnished with means and helps to defend themselves. And therefore there follows, *A king is not saved*, that he may shew that the safety of men's lives stands not upon their own strength, but upon the favour of God alone. He names chiefly *kings* and *giants*, who being exempted from the common lot, seem to themselves to be out of danger of gunshot; and if anything adverse betide them, they warrant themselves an easy escape. Finally, besotted in the confidence of their own strength, they scarce think themselves mortal. And this pride of theirs is hardened more by the fond wonderment of the common people, who are amazed at their puissance. But if neither a king come off safe by his host, nor a giant by his strength, when they come in any danger; in vain do all mankind leave God's providence, and look about for earthly helps. Whence it follows, that nothing is more miserable than either the strong or the weak, till they lean on the defence of God. In the next verse, under the name of *horse*, by the figure synecdoche, he denotes any manner of help; for in general his experience is, that those who think their life well fortified with worldly means, are commonly disappointed at the very crisis of danger, and are miserably beguiled to their utter undoing, that by this means God may convict them of foolishness. True it is that kings are neither armed with the sword in vain, nor the use of horses superfluous, nor the treasures and armies which God lendeth to preserve men's lives needless, so that every man observed the right mode of using them. But forasmuch as the greater part, the more defences they are guarded with, withdraw the further from God, and by false imagination surmise themselves to be in a haven free from all trouble, God doth justly, to disappoint this madness. Hence it comes to pass that God's gifts often slip away without effect, because the world, by severing them from the giver, is also bereft of his blessing.

18 Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, and upon them that trust in his mercy.

19 To deliver their souls from death, and to quicken them in the time of famine.

18 *Behold.*] After he has shewn that often whatsoever things are accounted to be the best defences to save men profit nothing, or rather are utterly worthless, when men place their safety in them; now, on the contrary, he shews that the faithful, although they are neither men of great power, nor have abundance of wealth, are nevertheless sufficiently guarded with the only grace of God, and will be preserved evermore. The meaning of the prophet is not a little illustrated by this comparison, that kings and giants are not a bit the better for their invincible strength; but God relieveth the saints in famine and dearth, as if he should restore them to life when they were dead. Now we understand better to what intent the prophet threw down all the strength of the world; verily, not that men should lie still under foot, or that they should be so heartbroken that they should pine away in despair; but that laying aside all pride, they should concentrate all their thoughts upon God alone, and believe that their life depends upon his protection. Moreover, in saying that the eye of the Lord is bent upon his servants, he expresses more than if he had said his hand and his power suffice to sustain them and hold them up. For it might steal into the minds of the weak, to doubt whether God will extend the same to each several person. But now, by representing him as it were keeping watch and ward for the safety of the faithful, there is no cause why any of us should tremble any more, or argue with himself, seeing he is assured of God's help, provided he abide quietly under his providence. Hence it appears more clearly, how truly he said a little before, that *the people were blessed whose God is the Lord;* because that without him, whatsoever strength or substance we have, it will be but vain, deceitful, and vanishing; but he, even with his look alone can defend his faithful, relieve their wants, feed them in famine, and quicken them when they are appointed to death. Now although all mankind are cherished by the providence of God, yet we know he vouchsafeth not his fatherly care to any peculiarly, save his children; that they may feel indeed that he regardeth their necessities. Again; seeing that God affirmeth that even in famine and death he hath remedies in readiness to preserve the lives of the godly, we are admonished that due honour is then only yielded to his providence, when the faithful discourage not their hearts in extreme penury, but rather lift their hope upward even out of the grave. For God suffereth his servants to be hungry for a time, that he may give them their fill afterwards; and he overcasteth them with the darkness of death, that he may restore them to the light of life. Nay rather, we never begin to ground our trust

substantially upon him, till death begin to hover before our eyes, because the helps of the world hold our senses entangled and fastened in them, till they have given us trial of their vainness. He distinguishes the faithful with two titles, wherein is contained the entire perfection of our life. The first is, that we should serve God devoutly; and the other is, that we should ground ourselves upon his grace. Surely, although the hypocrites boast of faith with inflated cheeks, yet have they not so much as once sipped of God's goodness with the extremity of their lips, so as that they can wait to receive at his hand whatsoever they have need of. And whereas the faithful yield themselves wholly to the service and fear of God, this disposition springs from faith; yea rather, their depending upon his mercy is accounted the chief part of worshipping him aright.

20 Our soul waiteth upon the Lord; he is our help, and our shield.

21 Surely our heart shall rejoice in him, because we will trust in his holy name.

22 Let thy mercy light upon us, O Lord; according as we have trusted in thee.

20 *Our soul.*] Whatsoever he has spoken hitherto concerning God's providence, and especially concerning the faithful guardianship, whereby he defends those that are his, he has not spoken them so much from his own thoughts as from the dictation of the Holy Ghost. But now, in the person of the whole church, he avouches that nothing is better than to commit our welfare to God. So we see the fruit of the former doctrine set before all the faithful, that they may not doubt to cast themselves with a confident and buoyant heart upon the fatherly care of God. For in this respect the prophet protests nothing of himself privately, but joins all the faithful with him in the same consent of faith. And there is a latent force in the word *soul*, because although it be a common manner of speech among the Hebrews, yet it expresses an earnest affection; as if the faithful should say, they look unto God with a whole and unfeigned heart, because they account him as their shield and defence.

21 *Surely our heart, &c.*] Forasmuch as the particle כִּי, which is repeated here twice, is taken diversely, it may have a twofold meaning. For if we expound it affirmatively, in both the members, the faithful will glory as well of their gladness as of their hope. And I disapprove not that these two should be read continuously, and yet, so

as to have reference to distinct things, thus: Surely God shall always be our gladness; Surely his holy name shall be as an invincible fortress to us for our refuge. For whence comes it that the faithful persist steadfastly in calling upon God, but because, contenting themselves with his grace, they hold fast this comfort in their heaviness and mourning, that he sustains their spirits? Rightly therefore do the faithful affirm in the former place, that their heart rejoices in the Lord, because they wander not after the enticements of the world, so that they should totter and waver according to the diverse inclinations of fortune, but include the whole substance of blessed life in the free and fatherly favour of God. And afterwards, in the second place they add, that *they trust in his holy name.* Notwithstanding, if any one choose to take the particle כי in the way of rendering a cause, the sense will flow never a whit the less aptly and elegantly, thus: Because our hope has been fixed in God, he will not be behindhand with his part, in ministering continual matter of gladness. And certainly, experience proves that men are overwhelmed with sorrow, and pine away with care, grief, and anguish, that they may reap the reward of their fondness, because nothing is more hard than for their hopes to be fastened on God alone, so that they may not buoy themselves up with fallacious encouragements.

22 *Let thy mercy.*] The Psalm is closed after all with a prayer, which the prophet makes in the name of all the godly, that they may perceive, in very deed, that they leaned not on God's goodness in vain. By the way, the Spirit, in delivering this rule of praying by the mouth of the prophet, hath taught us, that the gate of God's grace is opened; from whence, and not elsewhere, salvation is to be sought, or looked for. And moreover, hence is elicited a most sweet comfort; that if our faith faint not in the midst of our race, it is not in the least to be feared but that God will continue his mercy towards us without interruption even unto the end.

PSALM XXXIV.

[*A Psalm of David, when he changed his countenance before Abimelech, who drove him out of his house, and he went his way.*]

David gives thanks to God for a signal deliverance; and, taking occasion therefrom commends, God's perpetual grace towards all the godly, and exhorts them both to faith and to the following of godliness; affirming that the only way and means to go through life happily and according to one's heart's

desire, is to walk purely and innocently in the world, in the service and awe of God. Moreover, it appears by the title what manner of benefit of God's he commends. For seeing he was driven to flee to king Achish, 1 Sam. xxvii. 2, whom he knew to be his most deadly foe, saving Saul, it was not credible that he should have been let go scot-free. And therefore he had none other shift to save his life, but to feign himself mad by driveling down his spittle, by assuming a fierce look, and by disfiguring his countenance. And no marvel; for Achish, being disappointed of assured hope of victory, and imputing to David only his loss and dishonour, burned with implacable hatred of him. Then, that he was let go contrary to the hope of himself, and of all others, he acknowledges therein a singular token of God's favour, which may pertain to the general instruction of the church. Whereas instead of Achish is put Abimelech, it is probable that this latter name was commonly used among the Philistines, as the Egyptians called their kings Pharaohs, and as the Roman emperors have borrowed the name of Cæsar, from Julius Cæsar, who made himself the first tyrant among them. And we know that many hundred years before David was born, the kings that reigned in Gerar in the time of Abraham, were called by the name of Abimelech; wherefore it is no marvel that this name should pass to their successors from hand to hand, so that it should become common to all the kings of Palestine. The Hebrew word טַעַם, which I have translated *countenance*, inasmuch as it signifies also taste and understanding, might fitly be expounded, that he seemed witless. For the word from whence it is derived, whereas it signifies properly to taste, is also referred to reason, to understanding, and to all the senses. The word *witless*, therefore, will well agree, because David feigned himself to be out of his wits. But, because a man is discerned chiefly by his speech, and by framing of his countenance so that judgment may be formed of him; it is well translated by others, that David changed his countenance, because in so doing he took away the taste and knowledge that men would have had of him. Now although David escaped by this subtle device, yet he doubts not but he was delivered by the hand of God. Neither yields he the praise of his safety to his own counterfeiting of madness, but rather acknowledges that the cruelty of his enemy was assuaged by the secret instinct of God; so that he who lately burned with fury was then put off with a trick. And in good truth, it was not to be hoped that Achish would have driven away so valiant a person, whom he had felt to be a destruction to his whole realm, and by whom he had

been greatly endamaged, because he felt contempt for him. Here also arises a question, whether David counterfeited his madness by the guiding of the Holy Ghost? for he seems to join these two things together; namely, feigning of foolishness, and desirable success: whereby a man may conjecture that the same Spirit which put this Psalm into David's heart was his counsellor and leader in deceiving king Achish. I answer, that if the Lord now and then deliver his servants in such sort that they mistake in choosing the means, or slip aside, there is nothing against reason in this. Then was the deliverance the work of God; and the vice that was intermingled, which was not void of blame, must be ascribed to David. So Jacob obtained the blessing by the favour and good pleasure of God; but yet, therewith was mingled his mother's subtlety, which we are sure was blameworthy. Therefore it will happen that some deed may be ruled by the Spirit of God, and yet that the saints, who are the instruments thereof, may swerve from the right line; and therefore it is superfluous to labour to exculpate David: but rather he seems to be blamed for that, in not committing his life simply to God, he made himself and the grace of the Spirit that ruled him, a laughingstock to the ungodly. For although I dare not avouch anything, yet there appears some token of infirmity in this leasing. If any one take exception, that David commends God's grace because he escaped death by changing his countenance and speech; I answer again, that David in plain terms expresses a circumstance, that sets forth God's grace yet more; namely, that his falling was not laid to his charge.

2 I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall always be in my mouth.

3 My soul shall make her boast of the Lord, the lowly shall hear of it and be glad.

4 Magnify ye the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.

5 I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered me out of all my fear.

6 They shall look unto him, and flock about him, and their face shall not be ashamed.

7 This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and delivered him out of all his troubles.

2 *I will bless the Lord.*] He extols God's greatness; promising to be mindful of his benefit all his life long. For al-

though God help his servants daily, that they may occupy themselves continually in his praises; yet it is certain, that a benefit which is called worthy of everlasting remembrance, is distinguished from other common benefits. Therefore the saints must hold this for a rule, that whatsoever good thing God hath bestowed upon them, they must from time to time call it to remembrance. If however, at any time, he put forth his power more apparently in preserving them, so much the more earnestly must they endeavour to shew themselves thankful. Now if by one only benefit, God thus bind us to him even to our lives' end, so that we may never lawfully cease from setting forth his praises, what shall we do where he heapeth innumerable benefits upon us? In the beginning of the second verse, he adds, that the praise which he had before said should be continually in his mouth, shall proceed from his heart, that it may differ from the empty sound of the tongue, wherewith many hypocrites vaunt themselves. For the praises of God must so sound forth from our mouth, that the inward affection of the mind may always go before. Therefore, in this place, *the soul* signifies not the breath of life, but the seat of the affections; as if he should say, he should have such great occasion of glorying in God alone with an unfeigned heart, that no forgetfulness should at any time hide so great a deliverance. In the other member he notes the fruit of thanksgiving; that is to say, because troubled and miserable persons shall thereupon conceive good hope. For by the word עניים the Hebrews term not any manner of miserable persons, but such as being subdued and brought low with afflictions, breathe nothing of arrogance, but are lowly and meek. These, he says, shall be partakers of joy; not simply in respect of their feeling of kindness, as some too coldly expound it, but because, being persuaded that God hath set forth a general proof of his grace in the example of David, they will lift upwards their minds from heaviness. Therefore he avouches that the joy shall spring of hope; because, having received as it were a pledge of their deliverance, they shall betake themselves cheerfully unto God.

4. *Magnify ye the Lord.*] He rehearses another fruit of thanksgiving; namely, that he shall by his example move others to the same duty of godliness. Yea rather, he calls all the godly to participate in it, alluring and exhorting them to set forth God's praises lustily with one consent. Therefore we are taught, that as often as God shall have helped any one of his servants, it is an encouragement to all of us to hope well; and that when any one man rehearses the benefits which he has received severally to himself, it is an in-

citement to all to praise God together openly. For to this end do we give thanks to God openly before men, not only that they may be witnesses of our thankfulness, but that they also should follow our example.

5 *I sought the Lord.*] Now he unfolds more openly and more at large, what he had glanced at just now, concerning gladness; and first, he reports that his prayers were heard. This he applies to all the godly; that being confirmed with so notable an assurance, they might take heart to pray. What it is to seek God, appears by the next verse: for in other places it is taken in another sense. For it imports as much as to bend the mind and to apply one's earnest endeavours to the service of God, and to have all one's thoughts employed upon him. But here it is nothing else than to flee to him for help. For soon after it there follows, *That God answered him,* and in a peculiar sense he answers men's requests and prayers. He takes *fear* for the very dangers themselves that struck his mind with fear; that is to say, the effect for the cause; albeit there is no doubt, but he confesses himself to have been scared and troubled with fearfulness. For he looked not down with an untroubled mind, as it were from a distant elevation, upon his own dangers; but being vexed with sore torments of cares, he might justly speak of his fears and terrors. Yea rather, by using terms of the plural number, he shews that he was not put in fear by some one means, but haled divers ways hither and thither amidst sundry vexations. And surely, on the one side he saw himself on the point of suffering an ignominious death; and on the other side, he might also stand in fear, lest Achish should have sent him to Saul to curry favour with him, according as the ungodly are wont to make sport for themselves of the children of God. And forasmuch as he was once detected and betrayed, it could scarce be otherwise but that, if he happened to escape from them, Saul's assassins would lay wait for him on all sides. But the hatred that Achis had conceived against him for killing Goliath, and for the slaughter of his host, might breed many fears, considering that it was easy for him to be revenged, and his cruelty, in all probability, would not be appeased with a light punishment. This must be marked advisedly; that our own niceness prevent us not from calling upon God, if at any time our perils put us in fear. For not even David, whom we know to have excelled others in heroic virtue, repelled fear and disquietness with a heart of iron; but even he also was sore discomfited with fear.

6 *They shall look unto him, &c.*] I have already given

warning that this verse and the next following ought to be read continuously with that which went last before. For David has related his own experience of things that should be an ensample to others, that they might approach fearlessly to God, to make suit to him. Now therefore, he says they shall come, yea, and that with a happy issue. Nevertheless, although the two first verbs are of the time past in the Hebrew, yet I doubt not but that the sentence ought to be resolved thus; When they shall have looked unto and flocked about him, their faces shall not be ashamed. Therefore I have translated it in the time to come, because David declares not what had been done before, but commends the fruit of the favour that had been shewn him. I know that some refer the words *unto him*, to David, because, immediately after, he speaks of himself in the third person; but more correctly do other interpreters expound it of God himself. Also all agree not in the word נהרו, which some, supposing it to be derived from the root אור, have translated *to be enlightened*. But in my opinion, the natural signification of the word seems to agree well with this place: as if he had said; Now shall there be set forth a mirror for men to behold God's serene and merciful countenance in. Therefore shall miserable men be bold hereafter to lift up their eyes, and to run as it were unencumbered to God, because doubting shall no longer retard them, or make them sluggish. But if any one shall be better pleased with the word *enlighten*, the sense will be; They that erewhile lay benumbed in darkness, shall lift up their eyes unto God, as though a light had sprung up, and they that lay overwhelmed with shame, shall clothe their countenances with smiles instead. As the matter is all one in effect, I contend the less which translation may be the fitter.

7 *This poor man cried.*] David brings in all the godly speaking of himself, the more emphatically to express what great force his example has to encourage them. This poor man, say they, cried; therefore, God invites all poor men to cry. For in David they weigh the things that belong to the common benefit of the godly. For God is as willing and ready at this day to hear all the afflicted, who direct their sighs, wishes, and cries to him, with the same faith that David did, as he was at that time to hear David.

8 The angel of the Lord pitcheth his tents round about them that fear him, and shall deliver them.

9 Taste ye, and see how good the Lord is; blessed is the man that putteth his trust in him.

10 Fear the Lord, ye saints of his; for they that fear him, want nothing.

11 The lions' whelps do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that fear the Lord shall not want any good thing.

8 *The angel of the Lord.*] Now in general David preaches of God's fatherly favour towards all the godly; and at the same time teaches that there is power enough in him to save men. And because the life of man is in hazard of being stricken with innumerable darts, and especially because the faithful, who are as sheep in the midst of wolves, being as it were besieged with many deaths, are worried every moment with some new danger or other; therefore, David asserts that the worshippers of God are protected and defended by the guardian power of God. And his drift is this; that the faithful, although they be in hazard of many harms, should notwithstanding assure themselves that God is a faithful preserver of their life. But to strengthen them the more in this hope, it is not for nought that he adds at the same time, that whomsoever he will have saved, he defendeth by the hand and ministration of angels. Truly, God's own power alone were enough to perform this: but in mercy to our infirmity, he vouchsafeth to employ angels as his ministers. For it avails not a little to the strengthening of our faith, that great hosts are always ready, at the command of God, to aid us as often as he listeth; or rather that the angels, who are called the heavenly principalities and powers, are ready to do it, because they know it to be the charge enjoined them. Worthily indeed is God called the wall, and every other kind of defence of his church; but in accommodation to the limited measure of our poor understandings, he arrays his angels as the instruments of his present help. Nevertheless, what he pronounces of one angel in the singular number, we must extend to all angels; for they are all together called ministering spirits, to take charge of our welfare, Heb. i. 14, and elsewhere, as in 2 Kings vi. 15, Psalm xci. 11, and Luke xvi. 22, the scripture teaches that each person has many angels appointed him; verily, according as the Lord thinketh good, and knoweth it to be for our benefit. Let this be considered the sum of it; that howsoever many enemies assault us, and howsoever many dangers beset us, yet do the angels keep watch and ward about us, armed with the invincible power of God; and set their help as a barrier on all hands, to deliver us from all evil.

9 *Taste ye, and see &c.*] Indirectly he reproves men for their dulness, because they perceive not God's goodness, which ought to be known unto them above all things. For by the word *taste*, he reproves them as tasteless, and therewith assigns the cause; namely, that they gulp down God's benefits without tasting them, or else hide them with unthankful fastidiousness. Therefore, he bids them only to awaken their understanding, or to bring a palate endued with some capacity of tasting, that God's goodness may be known to them, or rather be made apparent to them. Word for word it is, *Taste ye, and see, for the Lord is good;* but the particle כִּי is taken expositively. The effect is, that there is no hindrance in God, but that the faithful, whom David speaks to peculiarly in this place, may know his goodness, perfectly by assured proofs. Whereby we gather that even they also are tainted with the common malady of dulness, as well as others. This doctrine is confirmed by the promise immediately added; *Blessed is the man that trusteth in him;* for he disappointeth no man that is desirous of his grace. But our own unbelief is the only impediment, that he satisfieth us not largely and bounteously with rich abundance of all good things.

10 *Fear the Lord.*] Here, that the faithful may set open a gate for God's benefits, he exhorts them to holiness and righteousness. We know in what men are commonly wont to shift for themselves; how every man resorts to craftiness, or filching, or wrongful violence. And it cannot be, but that the faithful must be stimulated by a desire to be even with them, and so give themselves leave to prowl among the wolves. And though they willingly forbear all wrongdoing, yet the general course of living carries them away like a tempest, and they think in the meanwhile to excuse themselves by necessity. These affections David bridles, promising that all things shall happen for the best, provided they keep themselves in the fear of God, which he opposes to all wicked practices and devices. For the greater part of men condemn them of folly, that give themselves to simplicity, because in so doing they provide ill for themselves, and for their own profit. Therefore, although worldly men be afraid of want, whence their fleshly sense moves them to attempt anything; yet David testifies here, that God hath a care of the faithful, so that he will never suffer them to want. Let no fear, or distrust, says he, lead us from following that which is right; because, God will never forsake them that are good and virtuous. Wherefore, he bids them yield this honour to God; that they should look for more at the hand of him alone, than the ungodly look for

from their unlawful practices. Howbeit, since iniquity boils over everywhere in the world with unmitigated vehemence, he speaks expressly to the saints, that they should look to themselves, because he would do no good with the promiscuous multitude. For it is contrary to general opinion, that whereas the innocence of the good and simple sort is set open to the lust of the wicked, yet there should be more surety in innocence than there is in all the crooked shifts that can be devised. Neither is it against reason, that the saints, who already of their own accord follow innocence, should have this command given them, not to depart from the fear of God. For we know how easy a matter it is for the light of godliness to be overwhelmed and quenched, when there appears no hope of living prosperously and happily, save in the enticements of the world. And he illustrates this doctrine, That God giveth his servants what is sufficient for them, and relieveth their want, with a most apposite comparison; when the lions, which in fierceness surpass all beasts of prey in the world, do notwithstanding wander about famished. Some think that under the name of lions are metaphorically betokened such as use violence and rapine; but in my judgment it is too refined. For David asserts simply, that such as withhold themselves from all unrighteousness, profit more by so doing, than by rapine and plunder; because the lions also, and the wild beasts that live upon prey, do often suffer hunger, while the Lord feedeth his servants. Therefore, his saying is, that the lions shall perish for hunger and want of food, sooner than God will disappoint the righteous and plain dealing, of their needful food, who being contented with his blessing alone, seek not their sustenance elsewhere than at his hand. Now then, whosoever shall so cast his care upon God, and take him for his purveyor and father, he shall be sure to live quietly and calmly among men, without any harm. If any man object, that oftentimes the good and virtuous are not privileged from penury; I answer, that God's hand is stretched out to succour them in due season, when they are brought to the uttermost pinch; so that the ultimate event always shews that it is not in vain to seek of him whatsoever is necessary to the sustenance of life.

12 Come, children, hearken unto me, I will teach ye the fear of the Lord.

13 What man is he that desireth life, and loveth long days that he may see good?

14 Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lip that it speak not guilefully.

15 Eschew evil, and do good: seek for peace, and follow after it.

12 *Come, children.*] He dwells with increased earnestness on exhorting the faithful, that they should not think anything to be more for their profit, than to behave themselves justly and innocently towards all men. For as the greater part of men imagine that the best and most compendious method to live in prosperity and ease, is to strive to overreach other men with violence, craft, wrong, and other means of mischief, the repetition of this lesson is necessary. Furthermore, as they had need to be of chastened minds, by calling them children he mitigates all unhallowed affections by that gentle and loving term. For there is not any man that can stand firm among so many assaults, save him that is framed, by the spirit of meekness, to most perfect self-control. The prophet, therefore, tells them first, that the law which he gives them to live by, cannot be kept and observed but by such as are meek and tractable. To the same purport also is the expression *come*, and that he wills them to hearken; that is, that laying aside all wilfulness, and having calmed all rage and heat, they should yield themselves willing to learn, and easy to be dealt with. He has put *the fear of the Lord*, for the very rule of godly life; as though he had said, Albeit that virtue and righteousness are bandied in all men's mouths, yet there are but few that frame their life well and as they ought to do, because they know not what it is to worship God.

13 *What man is he, &c.*] The prophet demands not whether any man be thus minded, as though all men willingly procured misery to themselves; for we know it is the common desire of all men to live well and happily. But he lashes the blindness and folly they exhibit in their froward and preposterous endeavours; for whereas all men run eagerly about to catch that which is for their profit, scarcely one in a hundred can find in his heart to purchase himself peace, and a quiet and desirable state of life, by righteousness and true dealing. The prophet, therefore, admonishes his disciples, that almost the whole world fall and stray from righteousness, while they promise themselves a happy life from other sources than the blessing of God, which he vouchsafeth to none but the simple and upright. But greater vehemence is contained in this exclamation, the better to awaken dull and drowsy minds; as if he had said, Seeing

that all men covet happiness, how comes it to pass that in a manner no man sets his mind to obtain it; and that each man, by his own fault, does rather purchase himself sundry troubles?

14 *Keep thy tongue.*] Here he delivers a precept relative to a rare virtue: that we should be true, and utterly free from guile in our discourse. Howbeit, some extend it further, supposing that slander is condemned in this former member. It is, however, more simple and correct to understand that which he repeats in the second member; namely, that we should not speak deceitfully to our neighbours, that our words should not be snares to entangle men. And because nothing is harder than so to rule our tongue, that our words may be the unadulterated image of our mind, therefore David exacts a heedful regard, that we suffer it not to run riot to deceive men.

15 *Eschew evil, &c.*] He bids the children of God abstain from all misdealing, and to inure themselves to well-doing. This verse is generally wont to be cited, as though David treated of the two parts of repentance. For the first step of repentance is, that the sinner forsake the vices to which he is given, and renounce his former life; and the second is, to frame his behaviour according to righteousness. But in this place we are taught peculiarly how we ought to deal with our neighbours. Now because it often happens, that he who is liberal, yea, or prodigal, to some sort of men, or at least helps many by his good offices, injures others by deceiving or hurting them, David does well to begin at this part, that they who covet to have their life approved before God, should withhold themselves from doing evil. Again; because many think themselves very well discharged of their duty if they have neither deceived, nor wronged, nor endamaged any man, he has done very well to add the other precept concerning welldoing. For God cannot abide that his servants should be idle, but will have them to employ their labours in common, that one should seek and consult for another's good. Afterwards he commends an anxiety to maintain peace; and we know it is maintained by gentleness and forbearing. But because we have often to do with wayward, or stubborn, or with churlish folk, or with such as are incited to contention by every light occasion; and because many wicked persons assail us from time to time; some, by their own naughtiness, as much as in them lies, withdrawing the minds of good men from them, and others seeking to pick quarrels on purpose; he teaches not simply that peace is to be sought, but if at any time it shall seem to shun us, he bids us labour steadfastly in pursuing it.

But here is some limit to be put; for when good and mild men shall have tried all the ways to purchase peace, they will be so far from softening the hearts of the wicked, or from turning them to uprightness, that they rather provoke their malice. Again; their peevishness oftentimes makes us to fall out with them; or rather it were treachery in us not to resist them when they, as it were, defy God by proclaiming open war against him. But here David bids us to be meek and compliant towards them only in affairs which concern ourselves personally, and to endeavour earnestly that peace be preserved, how much soever it be to our pain or hindrance.

16 The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry.

17 The countenance of the Lord is upon them that do evil, to wipe out the remembrance of them from the earth.

18 They cried, and the Lord heard them, and delivered them out of all their troubles.

16 *The eyes of the Lord.*] The best support of patience is to believe that God hath regard of us, and that, according as every man holds on in a course of right and equity, so shall he be saved and preserved by his defence. Therefore, lest the faithful might think themselves exposed to the lust of the world, while they endeavour to keep themselves innocent, and this fear might lead them out of the way, David exhorts them to bring back their minds to God's providence, and not to doubt but they are shrouded under his wings. Now he says that the eyes of the Lord are occupied in watching over the righteous, that the good and simple might proceed the more cheerfully in their uprightness. Meanwhile he quickens them to supplication and prayer, if at any time the world assail them wrongfully; for in saying that the ears of the Lord are open to their cry, he admonishes us that the timely remedy in all troubles is, that he who is afflicted without desert or cause, should call upon God as his avenger. And on the contrary part he declares, that although now and then God wink at men's misdeeds to outward appearance, because he punisheth them not at once, yet nothing escapeth his sight. *When the wicked,* says he, *become more bold to sin, because they are not punished, then doth God watch to bring their memorial to nought.* And he expresses this kind of punishment purposely, because the ungodly not only think that they shall be happy

even to their life's end, but also imagine that they shall never die in this world. Peter, 1 Ep. v. 10, applies this text judiciously to the assuaging of our sorrows and appeasing of our impatience, as often as the frowardness of evil persons seeks to drive us out of the way; because, to the preservation of stayedness, nothing is more available than to depend upon God's help, and to refer judgment to him, in assurance of a good conscience. If any man object that good men feel far otherwise, for after long and much vexation they find no help in the end; I answer, that God neither openly nor always succoureth the good after one manner, and yet he so tempers their sorrows that he never forsaketh them. Besides this, men disappoint themselves of the good help of God, because scarce the hundredth person preserves his innocence so pure but that he procures some evil to himself by his own default. And as soon as they are fallen, lest sin should take root in them, God chastiseth them forthwith, yea, and that more sharply than he doth the castaways, whom he spares to their utter destruction. And yet, howsoever matters be mingled and confused in the world, good men shall find that help is not promised them in vain against violence and injuries.

18 *They cried, &c.*] His meaning is, that they are heard as often as they cry; for it is a doctrine applicable to all times, inasmuch as it shews not what God hath done once or twice, but what he is wont to do continually. And it is a confirmation of the sentence going before, where he had said that the ears of the Lord are open to the cry of the righteous; and now he shews, by the sequel itself, that God is not deaf when we lay our complaints and sighs before him. But by the word *cry* he admonishes us, that although God defend the righteous, yet are they not privileged from adversities, for it is wonderful how he tempereth his defence in preserving them, that he may exercise them in many encounters. Also, it ought to be no small spur to us to pray, inasmuch as deliverance is promised to those only that call upon God: for he will not have the godly make such account of his providence, as that they should be benumbed in idleness, but rather direct their prayers to him, upon assured belief that he is the preserver of their welfare.

19 The Lord is near them that are heartbroken; he will save such as be bruised in spirit.

20 Many are the troubles of the righteous, and the Lord will deliver him out of them all.

21 He keepeth all the bones of him; one of them is not broken.

22 Malice shall slay the ungodly; and they that hate the righteous shall be destroyed.

23 The Lord ramsometh the soul of his servants; and they shall not perish whosoever trust in him.

19 *The Lord, &c.*] He amplifies and extends further the former doctrine; that God is the deliverer of his servants although brought to the last cast, and scarce able to draw their breath. For it is a hard trial, when God's grace is delayed and withdrawn from our sense so long, that the breath fail us; yea rather, it is an incredible paradox, that God is then near the faithful, when worn out with faintness of heart they are at the point of dissolution. But yet by that means his power shineth forth more clearly, while he lifteth us as it were out of the grave. Besides this, it is fitting that the faithful should be utterly cast down and reduced, that they may breathe again in God only. Whereby also we gather, that nothing is more opposite to true fortitude than that haughtiness whereof the Stoics prate; for we are not accounted to be truly humbled, until affliction of heart have thrown us prostrate before God, that he may lift us up from the earth. O doctrine full of most sweet comfort, that God departeth not from us even then, when miseries upon miseries overwhelm us, and we are as it were bereft of life!

20 *Many are the troubles.*] He prevents the thoughts that most commonly arise in our minds; namely, how it can come to pass, that the righteous should be regarded of God, when they are continually harassed with so many contrary waves. For to what purpose serves God's protection, but to make them enjoy quiet rest, that lead a peaceable life? and what is more against reason, than that they should be tossed and turmoiled who put no man to trouble? Therefore, lest the temptations wherewith we are continually assailed may banish the belief of God's providence, we must hold this for a warning; that although God govern the righteous, and provide for them, yet are they subject and obnoxious to many miseries, that being tried by such experiments, they may exhibit a proof of their invincible constancy, and feel the better that God is their deliverer. For were they free and exempt from such trouble, their faith would wax dull, their calling upon God would flag, and their devotion would lie hid and unknown as if it were buried; therefore it is needful for them to be exercised with sundry schoolings, and especially to this end,

that they may acknowledge themselves to be wonderfully preserved by God, even among innumerable deaths. For that which happens seldom might seem to be but a chance; but when miseries follow one another in succession, without ceasing or measure, if the Lord always stretch out his hand to us, then is it evident that it is his grace. Therefore, what adversities soever hang over the faithful, David bids them to be ready in their minds, because God will never disappoint them; to whom it is no harder to deliver them a thousand times from death, than to deliver them but once. That which he adds concerning their bones, makes not a little to amplify the matter, that we may know that they shall be free from all harm, whom God taketh upon him to defend. Therefore he declares that God will see that there shall not one of our bones be broken; in which sense Christ also saith, *that the hairs of our head are numbered;* Luke xii. 7.

22 Malice shall slay the ungodly.] Others take רעה rather for misery, so that the sense should be, that the ungodly should perish miserably; because in the end, they shall sink under their adversities. But the other translation is fuller; namely, that their wickedness, wherewith they think themselves fortified, shall light upon their own heads. Therefore as he taught before, that there was nowhere better defence than in a right and innocent life; so now he denounces, that whatsoever the ungodly shall frowardly attempt, it shall turn to their own destruction, though no man stir against them from elsewhere. In the second member he says that it is done for the righteous' sake; that the ungodly are the workers of their own death. *They shall be destroyed,* saith he, *whosoever they be that hate the righteous.* Therefore let this be to us as "a wall of brass" and impregnable; that however overwhelming the forces of the enemies which beset us, they are not to be feared, because they are already ordained to destruction. The same thing David confirms in the last verse; that is to say, that God is the ransomer of his servants. For how should they continue safe among so many dangers one instant, if God did not hold out his hand to keep off their foes? But by the word *ransom,* is expressed a manner of saving, from which the flesh shrinks greatly. For it behoves them to be first at death's door, ere God can appear to be their ransomer. Whence it follows that they foreclose the gate against God's grace, who are carried along too hastily, and think not that God worketh in their behalf, unless he be as speedy as they would have him. Nevertheless, lest any man might esteem God's servants by moral or philosophical virtue only, as they term it, David

gives them this as the chief mark by which they may be known, that they trust in God himself, upon whom also dependeth their welfare.

PSALM XXXV.

As long as Saul was displeased with David, the nobles and such as at that time bare any authority, according to the subservient spirit which always prevails in the courts of kings, had eagerly conspired the destruction of the innocent soul; and moreover had drawn almost all the commonalty into the fellowship of their hatred and cruelty; and so it came to pass that all of them, from the highest to the lowest, burned with implacable hatred towards him. But because he knew the greatest part of them were thoughtlessly impelled by error and folly, he takes only those for his enemies that sold their time-serving aid to Saul of a wicked and purposed malice. Against these he calls upon God for vengeance. And first, forasmuch as he knew himself to stand clear of offence, he alleges his own innocence before God; and secondly, forasmuch as he is vexed without desert, he calls upon God for deliverance. When he has complained of their ungodly cruelty, he calls down upon them the punishment they deserve. And because, relying upon the oracle of God, and the holy anointing, he hoped for a better issue; he everywhere intermingles testimonies of his thankfulness; and in the end, the Psalm closes with this, that after he shall have been delivered, he will set forth God's praises all his life long.

[*A Psalm of David.*]

1 Plead thou my cause, O Lord, with them that plead against me; fight thou against them that fight with me.

2 Lay hold upon the shield and buckler, and stand up to help me.

3 Bring forth the spear, and stop my persecutors by the way; say unto my soul, I am thy safeguard.

1 *Plead thou my cause.*] Because David's enemies not only assaulted his life openly, but also troubled him with slanders and false accusations, he desires redress of both grievances. For in the first place, by calling God in as the advocate of his cause, he means that he has to do with wicked and evil-tongued persons. Again; in stirring him up to take weapon in hand, he shews that he is oppressed by force. Now

although it be very unseemly, that a holy man, who had evermore deserved excellently at all men's hands, and hurt no man; who for his courtesy and meekness was worthy the favour of all men as well publicly as privately, could not gain so much thereby as to escape the assaults of venomous tongues; yet is it greatly to our profit to know it, and singularly available for example. For it must not seem wondrous or strange, if malicious persons carp at us, and bite us, seeing they spared not even David. But as their injurious conduct may be grievous and painful to us, so is there incomparable comfort offered herein, that God himself setteth his defence against false backbitings. Then let slanderers rise up and backbite us with forged crimes, so long as God refuse not to perform the part of an advocate against them. There is no doubt but, in the second member, David prays God to resist the armed violence of his enemies. The sum of the whole is, that being overwhelmed with slanderous reports, and oppressed with cruelty, and finding no help at all in the world, he commits as well his life as his good name to the keeping of God.

2 *Lay hold upon, &c.*] Certain it is, that this is improperly referred to God, who needeth neither spear nor shield, but is able of himself alone to overthrow his enemy, with a puff of his breath or with his nod only. Yet notwithstanding the Holy Ghost, not without cause, useth such figures as these, which may seem somewhat harsh at first sight, according to the rudeness of our understanding, that he may the more surely fasten the presentness of God's help in our hearts. For when harms and perils thrust themselves before our eyes, when manifest terrors encounter us on all sides, and when death itself appears before us, it is a hard matter to conceive God's hidden and invisible power, which may deliver us from all care and fear. For our understandings being gross and earthly, are borne downward. Therefore, that our faith may mount by degrees to the heavenly puissance of God, he is brought in armed with sword and target after the manner of men; even as in other places also, where he is termed a man of war, it is certain that it is a concession to our weakness, because our minds, by reason of their small capacity, could not otherwise comprehend that infinite power, which embraces every form of helping in it, and calls in no aid from any other source. Now the meaning is, that God, arming himself with his secret and intrinsic power, should shew that he alone sufficeth against all the array and forces of the ungodly. Some will have it that the word צנה is a dart, or some other kind of weapon: but forasmuch as properly it signifies a buckler, as we have seen in

the fifth Psalm, I see not why it should be wrested to another sense in this place. And it is not against reason that a buckler should be joined with a shield here, as it is often in other places; and more likely it is that any weapon should be put with *the spear*, whereof mention is made in the next verse. David, then, begins with defensive armour, that God should sustain and repulse the assaults of his enemies. Whereas the word ריק signifies to draw out of a scabbard, or to make bare, I take it simply for *to feteh out*, or *bring forth*. The word סגור which I have translated *to stop*, imports as much as *to shut* or *to close*. But as David's meaning is, that God. by setting himself as a wall or a rampart, should keep off his enemies from coming at him; I consider that I have translated it faithfully, unless any man like better the sense of *intercepting their onset* or *impeding it by presenting an obstacle:* all which things come to one point, for the opinion of those that contend that it is a noun, is by no means probable.

3 *Say unto my soul.*] Some expound it, *Declare to me by secret inspiration;* and others expound it, *Make me to feel indeed that my welfare is in thy hand.* For my part, I think that David wishes to have it thoroughly fixed in his mind, and to be fully persuaded, that God is the author of his welfare; a point which could not be determined from the aspect of things as they appeared before him; for such is our insensate dulness, that God oftentimes delivereth us when we are sleeping, and think of nothing of the kind. Wherefore, it is a forcible manner of expression, in which he prays to have a lively feeling of God's favour given him; that being armed with that buckler, he may sustain any onsets, and break through all manner of obstacles and difficulties; as if he should say, Lord, whatsoever it be that bears against me, to cause my heart to fail, keep thou me steadfast in this belief, that thou wilt surely save me. And howsoever temptations drive me hither or thither; call back my thoughts to thee, that thy salvation may shine forth high above all dangers. Yea rather, let me resolve without wavering, that I shall be saved through thy favour, as certainly as if thou toldest me so with thine own mouth.

4 Let them blush and be ashamed, that seek my life; let them be turned back and put to shame that think me evil.

5 Let them be as chaff before the wind, and let the angel of the Lord drive them.

6 Let their way be darkness and slipperiness, and let the angel of the Lord pursue them.

7 For without cause have they hid the pit of their net for me; without cause have they digged a pit for my soul.

4 *Let them blush and be ashamed.*] Now calls he upon God for vengeance against his enemies; and he not only desires of him to disappoint and overthrow their practices, but also to repay them the hire that they have earned. First, he wishes that they may be put to shame; that is, in being disappointed of their hope and desire; and afterwards he proceeds further, that they who seem to themselves to be firmly established and deep rooted may be like chaff or stubble. And as chaff is tossed with the wind, so wishes he that they may not rest by reason of the secret driving of the angel. The imprecation that follows is yet more dreadful; that whithersoever they stir their foot, they may meet with darkness and slippery places; and that the angel of the Lord should pursue them in their perplexity and amazement. In fine, whatsoever they take in hand, and whithersoever they turn themselves, he prays that all their devices and enterprises may terminate disastrously. Moreover, when he wishes that they may be driven by the angel; we gather that the reason why the ungodly are troubled, though no man pursues them, is because God smites them with the spirit of giddiness, and distracts them with inquietude, so that they are in a state of confusion and strife among themselves. The same thing he more clearly expresses in the next verse; that the angel should drive them through darkness and slippery places, where they should not be able to keep their feet, so that they might have neither counsel nor reason to help themselves with, nor so much as time given them to fetch their breath. It is no marvel that this charge should be assigned to the angels, by whose hand God executeth his judgments: though the passage may be expounded no less of the devils, than of the heavenly angels which are ready to do the behests of God: for we know that the devil is permitted to exercise tyranny upon the castaways. Whence it is often said, that an evil spirit of the Lord's came upon Saul; 1 Samuel, xviii. 10. But when he uses the service of devils, since they are but dragged to execute his command against their wills, the scripture places the chosen and holy angels as his ministers in higher degree. God, then, executeth his judgment by the reprobate angels; but yet in suchwise as that he sets his elect angels

over them. In respect whereof also, they only are called rightful principalities, Eph. iii. 10; Col. i. 16, and in other similar places. If any one object that it is not seemly, that the angels, which are the ministers of grace and salvation and appointed guardians of the faithful, should do execution upon the reprobates; the solution is ready, that they cannot keep watch for the safety of the godly, without being at the same time furnished for war; nor be able to defend them with their help, without arraying themselves in fierce hostility against their enemies. As concerning the cursing, we must bear in mind what I have said elsewhere; that David neither pleads his own cause individually, nor rashly babbles out whatsoever choler dictated, nor was led by unadvised zeal to wish destruction to his emies: but, by the guiding of the Spirit, conceives moderate wishes against the reprobates; from which they are far removed, whosoever are led either by desire of revenge, or hatred, or any other inordinate motion of the flesh.

7 *For without cause.*] He testifies that he abuses not God's name in vain, nor summons him as his advocate without just cause; for he alleges his own innocence before all men, and complains that it is not for any fault of his, that he is afflicted so sore; which is to be marked advisedly, that no man may rush forward unduly into God's sight, or call upon him for vengeance, without the assurance of a good conscience. And whereas he says he was assailed with treachery and wicked practices, therein is conveyed a tacit commendation of his own integrity.

8 Let confusion come upon him unawares, and let his net, which he hath laid privily, catch him; let him fall into it with confusion.

9 And my soul hath rejoiced in the Lord; it shall be joyful in his deliverance.

10 All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee, who deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him; yea the poor and wretched from him that spoileth him.

8 *Let confusion, &c.*] Again he prays that God will turn the mischief upon his enemies, which they had purposed against a righteous and unoffending man. How common a thing it is among the Hebrews to change the number, is known well enough. Therefore, what is spoken here of one man, pertains in general to all men; unless perhaps it be preferred that Saul or some one of his nobles is denoted.

But because it is certain, that this wish is extended from the head to the whole body, there is no great weight in that matter; the word שואה signifies sometimes confusion, and sometimes destruction; and therefore many translate it, *Let destruction*, or *desolation*, or *ruin come upon him.* But the other seems to suit the place better, because soon after he adds; *let his own net catch him; let him fall into it with confusion.* Surely when others translate it, *that he should fall into the destruction itself;* it is harsh and constrained. But the sentence flows very well thus; that forasmuch as they slumber carelessly in their own dregs, and fear nothing, as though they were quite out of gunshot; mischief unlooked-for should overwhelm them suddenly, as it were a tempest. For they believe nothing less than that their arts and wiles, and their wicked practices, and all the snares they lay for the good and simple, shall turn to the destruction of the devisers of them. Therefore, most aptly does David wish that they may fall into the nets which they have laid, with confusion: that is to say, that they may be amazed for fear, at the suddenness of the mischief; for the more extravagant their exultation, through groundlessly conceived hope of escaping unpunished, so much the more does sudden fear astonish them. By the way, I doubt not but David signifies some strange and unaccustomed mischief. *Then let confusion come upon him unawares:* that is to say; When he shall have promised himself peace in his deceitful fascinations, then let unwonted terror strike him to the heart, and let him feel, by his tumultuous fear, that he is caught in his own snares.

9 *And my soul.*] Others read it in the mood of wishing; *May my soul rejoice and be joyful.* But in my judgment he does not so much continue his wishes, as promise that he will be thankful to God: which appears better by the next verse; where, extolling this benefit highly, he says he will celebrate the memorial thereof with every member of his body. Therefore whereas some thank fortune for their preservation, and some their own policy, but few or none yield the whole praise to God; David declares here, that he will be mindful of the grace that he has received. My soul, says he, shall rejoice, not in a deliverance which it knows not how it came by, but in the salvation of God. But to place the matter in a stronger light, he assigns to his bones the office of heralding God's glory; as though he were not contented with the service of his tongue, but applied all the members of his body to advance the glory of God. Now although he speak hyperbolically, yet without any feigning, he shews himself to be endued with such a fervour

of zeal, that he desires to spend his sinews and bones in attesting his devotion.

10 *Lord, who is like unto thee.*] He points out more evidently that joying of his in the salvation of God; namely, that he ascribed the deliverance which he had obtained wholly to God. For commonly men praise God so that he scarcely obtains the tenth part of his due. But David, distinguishing him from all others, expressly declares that the whole glory of his deliverance is due to him. And surely, then only do we yield to God that which is his, when decked with his own power he holds all our hopes immoveably fixed on him. For to what purpose serves it to sound God's name in our mouth, if we part his power and goodness at our pleasure? In the true spirit of godliness therefore does David commend God's greatness by this eulogy, that he is the avenger of the poor, and that he rescues the needy and afflicted out of the hand of the violent robbers; as if he should say, it is his peculiar duty to succour them that are in misery; by which words we are taught to cling to the hope of better things in adversity, because there is no reason why the power and resources of our enemies should weaken our confidence, howsoever they may excel in strength, since God telleth us out of heaven, that the end for which he reigneth, is to resist the mighty and strong. If there were but one drop of sound understanding in the children of this generation, who pour out their might to do hurt and to oppress the feeble, assuredly their boldness would stop short, and they would proceed no further in provoking the wrath of God.

11 Violent witnesses rise up, and charge me with things that I know not.

12 They requite me evil for good, to the utter discomfort of my mind.

13 Nevertheless, when they were sick, I did put on sackcloth; I pined myself with fasting, and my prayer returned upon mine own bosom.

14 I have behaved myself towards him as if he had been my fellow or my brother; I went pensively, as one that mourneth for his mother in black apparel.

15 But they rejoiced in my halting; they gathered themselves together; yea, even the very abjects, whom I knew not, gathered themselves together against me, making mouths at me, and ceased not.

11 *Violent witnesses, &c.*] By the future tense he denotes what he has suffered a long time. And he complains that he was so oppressed with slanders, that there was no opportunity to defend himself; than which nothing can happen more grievous and painful to gentle natures, and such as know themselves guiltless. And he not only says that he was charged with crimes falsely, but also finds fault with the boldness and frowardness of the witnesses that they rose up with violence. Hereunto pertains that which he adds, *that they charged him with things that he knew not of.* David therefore was not only spoiled of his worldly goods, and banished undeservedly, but also was loaded with slanders and reproaches under pretence of law. Being brought to this distress, he betook himself straight to God, hoping that he would maintain his innocence. So must God's children walk through good report and ill report, and patiently suffer all reproaches until God assert their innocence from out of heaven. For whereas in old time it was boasted as a proverb among heathen men, *that there is no theatre more beautiful than a good conscience;* truly therein they spoke nobly; but it cannot be that any man's conscience should be so clear, as to be able to hold him up, unless he flee unto God.

12 *They requite me, &c.*] Again he enhances the maliciousness of his enemies, in that they not only vexed him sore, being guiltless, and having deserved no such thing; but also, having received many and great benefits at his hand, they rendered a most iniquitous reward. And although such unworthy dealing wound good men more than anything, in respect of the fleshly understanding, and seem in nowise tolerable; yet it is inexpressible what great comfort it brings, when we may testify before God that we have done all that is incumbent upon us to bow the minds of our enemies to gentleness, and yet they are hurried on by implacable cruelty to work us mischief. For God will not suffer this barbarous and brutal ingratitude to be unrevenged. Also their cruelty is expressed better by another circumstance, in that they endeavoured to discomfort the heart of a meek and mild person; that is to say, to make it so bare and desolate that they might overwhelm it with despair, and destroy it. Afterwards, he reckons up certain kindnesses of his own, which ought to have been more solemn bonds of mutual love, if there had been any sense of justice in them. He says not that he had helped them with money or goods, or that he had been liberal to them by other means; for it may fall out that when the hand is bountiful, the heart may sometimes be niggardly; but he alleges more

assured tokens of true and earnest love; namely, that he was no less sorry before God, nor less grieved for their misfortunes, than if he should mourn for the death of his mother; and finally, that he bare them no less goodwill than he bare to his own brothers. Therefore, since of right they ought to have been beholden unto him, what could have been fouler than this ingratitude, that they vomited the poison of their hatred against him in his adversity? As for the words, I take *sickness* here to signify metaphorically any manner of discomfort or heaviness. For David's meaning is, that as often as anything untoward happened to them, he was partaker of their grief. And a witness hereof was the prayer which he says he poured into his own bosom. For the natural sense of the words is, that he vaunted not his desires before men ambitiously, as many pretend far more than they mean in their heart; but that he declared how sincerely and from his heart he was sorry, by praying in himself without making the world privy to it. For as we say that they laugh in their sleeve, who content themselves with secret and inward feeling of their own joy; so also may he be aptly said to weep or pray in his own bosom, who casts not forth his tears and prayers into the air, to catch the favour of men; but being content that God alone is his witness, conceals his affections in himself. And yet I deny not, that in this manner of speaking, there is denoted the gesture of one that prays; as if he should say, he bowed down his body to pray, with his head hanging down, and his arms folded, as men in heaviness are wont to do. But the chief thing that is to be considered, is his purpose; that there was no dissimulation in his prayers. To some it seems a protestation, and they gather this sense; Lord, if I wish them not good with all my heart, let all mischief light upon myself: but it is constrained. And not a bit more plausible is that other exposition, *because I have availed nothing by praying for them, the fruit of my prayer is returned into mine own bosom.* It would come nearer to the mind of the prophet, yea and to the very words, to say thus: *I have prayed for them none otherwise than for myself.* But that which I have alleged before, concerning the secret affection, will, I hope, satisfy right-minded readers. He has put *sackcloth* and *fasting*, as helps to praying. For although the faithful pray even after their meals, and enjoin not themselves daily fasting for prayer's sake, nor hold it needful to put on sackcloth as often as they come forth into the presence of God; yet we know that when any great necessity pinched them, then were these exercises resorted to. In a common calamity or danger all men put on sackcloth, and

all fasted without exception, that having simply admitted their guilt they might appease the wrath of God. If any man were afflicted privately, he stirred himself to earnestness in praying by the same tokens of mourning. Sackcloth in David, then, imported as much as if he should make himself guilty in the place of his enemies, who rushed upon him furiously to destroy him. Moreover, although we may number sackcloth and ashes among the ceremonies of the law, yet the same custom of fasting remains among us at this day. Wherefore if God allure us to repentance by shewing us signs of his wrath, let us bear in mind that we must not only pray after the ordinary manner, but also apply such incitements as may urge us to lowliness. In conclusion he says, he behaved himself none otherwise towards them, than if every one of them had been his brother.

15 *But they rejoiced in my halting.*] I see no reason why the interpreters should trouble themselves about the word *halting*. Some conjecture that David had his leg put out of joint, and others dream that he halted from disease. But if a man weigh the whole passage, nothing is more evident than that misfortunes are denoted; as if he had said, As soon as they saw me begin to trip and be ready to fall, they did as it were throng together, and endeavoured all at once to overthrow me utterly. Therefore, there is in this word *halting*, almost the same metaphor that was a little above in the word *sickness*. And it was a mark of the excessive fierceness of their rage; that whereas men often relent at the misfortunes of their enemies, so that they cease to hate or persecute the wretched, David's former friends were incited, by his casting down, to leap upon him with froward insolence. And although he point but at a few in the beginning, yet soon after he joins to them the promiscuous and common herd, in order to increase the indignity: not that he blames all alike, but that it may the better appear in what bitter hostility he was assailed. For it is to be believed, that they who were in chief authority in those days, were as firebrands to kindle the common fire, that the people should strive who might lift up his hand soonest to destroy David. And to note their wilfulness, he repeats twice that they were gathered together: unless perhaps any body choose to resolve it thus; they gathered themselves together, not only such as had any pretext for quarrel with him, but even down to the most despicable. They that are whipped, or stricken, are properly called נכים; but this word is rightly taken for reproachful and despised persons. Albeit some interpreters derive it from the word כאה, which signifies to cast one into heaviness, and expound it actively, *casting into heaviness*, or *putting*

to pain. But the first sense agrees better, That David was shamefully treated even by the lowest dregs of the people. The words *I know not*, may be referred as well to the matter, as to the persons. Notwithstanding, I interpret it of the persons, in this sense; So little cause have they to complain that I have done them any harm, that they are utterly unknown to me. And with it will be included a complaint that the people rage without any reason, seeing that David is conscious of no crime, nor can imagine any ground for such fierce hatred. Also in the last part of the verse, although the translators dissent, it shall suffice me to have brought the true and natural sense. Word for word it is, *they have cut*, and *not held their peace:* but there is no doubt that by the word *cut*, is denoted metaphorically the opening of the mouth; as if he should say, That they uttered their railings scoffingly, by pouting their lips. And when he adds, that *they held not their peace*, it is a repetition common among the Hebrews, to express vehemence or excess; as if he should say, there was no end or measure of their railing, while wicked men pour forth with distended throats whatever comes uppermost.

16 Among falsehearted scoffers of bread baked under the embers, they gnash their teeth upon me.

17 Lord, how long wilt thou see it? deliver my soul from their tumults, and my only one from the lions.

18 I will magnify thee in a great congregation, and among much people will I praise thee.

16 *Among false hearted scoffers.*] Others translate it, *with the hypocrites;* but in my judgment, David declares simply the conspiracy of his enemies. And the effect is, that among men of guile and naturally disposed to deceit, and then lost to all sense of shame, this alone was the continual subject of their deliberations; namely, how they might destroy an afflicted man. And now he turns again to the captains and heads, from whom all the mischief sprang, because this title would not agree with a great part of the common people, who were urged by unreflecting impulse. Therefore in express words he accuses the nobles about the palace, and others not unlike them, of cruelty, in that they gnash their teeth upon him like furious beasts. First he calls them falsehearted, or wicked, that he may the more easily obtain help and aid of God, as one that calls upon him in the extremity of distress. Secondly, by the word *scoffers*,

he means that they are brazenfaced, and so far past all shame that they are bold to do anything. Concerning the word כיעוג, which follows next, interpreters are not quite agreed. Properly it signifies bread baked upon the hearth under the embers. Nevertheless, some, because they could not elicit a suitable sense, have thought it to be taken for tattling loquacity, or idle communication. Others, presuming to range yet further, have supposed that their scoffing was instead of bread to them; namely, because they fed and delighted themselves with scoffing. But to me it seems best to hold still the proper signification of the word. And yet in so doing there may be a twofold sense: for some, taking כיעוג for a cheesecake, are of opinion that in this place the licktrenchers that hunted after fine and dainty fare are rebuked, such as always swarm in princes' courts. Others like rather that slavish and low persons should be denoted, who would employ their tongues in railing for little or nought, as in all ages they have been to be found that would, as men say, set their tongues to sale for a bit of bread. As for me, when I weigh other places wherein David describes the natures and conditions of his countrymen, I am inclined to conjecture that in this place are noted the table-jesters who gave their verdict of death against him in their cups. Therefore he complains that even in their convivial feasts, the ungodly, who had shaken off all shame, communed how they might kill him.

17 *Lord, how long wilt thou, &c.*] The part of speech which I have translated *how long*, is among the Hebrews doubtful. In English it is as much as to say, *How long wilt thou see it, to hold thy peace at it?* And this other translation, *When wilt thou, after thy long dissembling it, at length begin to see it?* will suit equally well. But it comes to the same; for David complains of God's long sufferance, in that he winketh too long at the wicked in their wantonness, and delayeth his vengeance too much. Now, although God bid the faithful abide his leisure quietly, till he think it ripe time to help them, yet he giveth them leave to bewail in their prayers the wearisomeness of his delay wherewith they are grieved. At the same time he shews that he is not urged headlong by this eager desire without sufficient reason, but because he is compelled by desperate distress; for he both says that they assault his life outrageously, and also compares them to lions; and he terms his soul *his only one*. For they that take the word *unicam* for dear and precious, do not well consider David's mind. Of this mention has been made, Ps. xxii. 21.

18 *I will magnify thee.* Again he promises thankfulness in

this verse, because there is nothing for the faithful to render to God, save the sacrifice of praise, as we shall see in Ps. cxvi. 17. And by this method he encourages himself to confidence of obtaining forgiveness, when, in the midst of the waves of care and danger, he breaks forth into giving of thanks, as though he had already obtained his desire. Wherein is seen a conspicuous proof of invincible fortitude; for though an outcast, fleeing from place to place, destitute of all help, and finally, in utter despair, yet he thinks still of praising God's grace, and makes vows of solemn sacrifice, as if deliverance shone upon him in the darkness of death. And he speaks not only of private thanksgiving, but of such thanksgiving as those that were delivered out of very great perils were wont to yield in the public assembly by the appointment of the law. Others translate it a *valiant, manly,* or *strong people;* but I approve not of it. They conceive the subtle notion that the church is endued with great valour, and therefore is called a *strong people.* But seeing that David points out the great resort and multitude of people that were wont to go up to the sanctuary to hold their holy meetings before God, I doubt not but that, in repeating one thing twice, according to his wont, after *the great congregation,* he adds *much people;* for the Hebrew word signifies both.

19 Let not them triumph over me which be mine enemies without my deserving; neither let them leer upon me with their eyes, which hate me without cause.

20 For they speak not peace, and they devise deceitful words upon the clefts of the earth.

21 They gaped upon me with their mouth, and said, Aha, aha! our eye saw it.

22 Thou, Lord, hast seen it; hold not thy tongue: Lord, be not far from me.

23 Awake, and rise up to my judgment; take thou my cause in hand, my God and my Lord.

19 *Let not them triumph, &c.*] Because David's enemies sought to make themselves merry with his overthrow and destruction, he prays God that he will not grant so wicked a desire. Moreover, that he may have God favourable to his cause, he protests again that there is no fault on his part, that they should hate him, but that it is their own mere wickedness that drives them to be so cruelly minded;

for it is of great moment to bring the witness of a good conscience before God, to make him the forwarder to help us. For those who take the word שקר for deceitfully, as though David should by this term note his enemies that laid wait for him, reason too subtly; and the repetition that follows directly after, shews that David complains of their wilful hatred; for that of their own accord, being not provoked by any displeasure, they maintained deadly feud against him that was their friend, and had deserved well of them. קרץ is taken here for *to wink with the eyes askance in mockery;* as in Ps. xxii. 6, it is taken for to wag their heads, and to make mouths. In the next verse he declares again, that he has to do with an unappeasable kind of enemies, who are utterly bent upon cruelty, that he may conceive the more confidence of God's help at hand; for thus must we believe, that the harder we are pressed, so much the more certainly must we hope for deliverance. Therefore he says, that they sound of nothing but uproars and slaughters. The latter member is somewhat doubtful, by reason of the various significations of the word רגע; for as its root signifies one while *to cut,* and another while *to rest,* some translate it *the meek of the earth,* and others *with the quiet of the earth,* meaning thereby the fat and full-fed folk, who enjoy undisturbed repose. Both seem to me to adduce forced interpretations. And not at all more correctly do others expound it, *in caves* or *secret places;* that is, lest their wicked and subtle devices should come to light. But by *the clefts of the earth,* a most appropriate metaphor, we may understand miserable men, that are as it were broken and maimed. David, therefore, means that as soon as his enemies see any chink open, forthwith they bear down upon him with all their might to overthrow him; for those who, during David's prosperous and flourishing state durst never so much as mutter, began to work mischief against him when he was falling: so that we may know them to be for the most part ungodly persons, of a slavish nature, and cowardly; and did not assume the tone of insolence, save when occasion offered by the adversities of good and simple men. To the same purport immediately after, he brings them in crying out with open mouth, *Aha, aha,* and clapping their hands for joy that they saw David lie under foot, which was a joyful sight for them.

22 *Thou, Lord, hast seen it.*] There is a tacit antithesis between this seeing of God's, and that former seeing whereat the ungodly rejoiced; as if he should say, You eagerly glut your eyes with the sight of my miseries; but God also hath eyes to mark the accursed wickedness of those that feed so

cruelly upon others' distresses. Howbeit, David pleads not with them, but rather betakes him straight unto God, and sets his providence as a rampart against those practices of theirs which might sorely shake his mind. And certainly, the only substantial fortification against the scoffs of our enemies, is to let them pass, and to gather our minds to God, and upon confidence of his fatherly care over us, to desire him to shew in very deed, that our troubles are not unknown to him; or rather, the more eagerly he seeth the wicked gape after our destruction, so much the more speedily to run to succour us; which thing David expresses by these sundry forms of speaking, *Hold not thy peace, depart not from me, awake, arise up.* David might justly utter these speeches, who was already thoroughly persuaded that God regardeth the poor and afflicted, and marketh all the wrongs that are done unto them. Therefore, that our requests may be framed aright, belief of God's promises must needs first shine in our hearts; and it must not only go in order before all other affections, but also rule them, and direct them.

24 Judge me, according to thy righteousness, O Lord my God, and let them not triumph over me.

25 Let them not say in their heart, Well done our soul; let them not say, We have undone him.

26 Let them be put to shame and confusion together, which are glad of my harms: let them be clothed with shame and reproach, which vaunt themselves against me.

27 Let them rejoice and be glad that favour my righteousness; and let them ever say, The Lord be magnified, which loveth the peace of his servant.

28 And my tongue shall talk of thy righteousness; and of thy praise every day.

24 *Judge me, according, &c.*] He confirms the former sentence, that God should be the advocate and maintainer of his cause; for as he had lain neglected for a time, he sets God's righteousness before him, which suffers him not to forsake the upright and just persons at the last. It is therefore a sort of earnest suit, that God, because he is righteous, should show an ensample of his righteousness by defending his servant in a good cause. And certainly, when we seem bereft and shut out from all help, there is no remedy more effectual to vanquish temptation, than that God's righteousness, whereon depends our deliverance,

cannot fall away. So Paul, 2 Thess. i. 6, to exhort the faithful to patience, says, *It belongeth to the righteousness of God to render affliction to such as persecute you.* And he appeals again to God's justice in this behalf, that he should abate the stateliness of his enemies; for the more proudly they vaunt themselves, so much the readier is God to succour us. And he portrays their fierceness in a graphic style, by bringing them in again speaking, to shew that if things should fall out according to their lust, they would set no limit to their frowardness. And because the more they vaunt themselves, the more they provoke God's wrath against them, not without cause does David raise up his hope, and ratify and seal his prayers with this argument.

26 *Let them be put to shame, &c.*] This imprecation has been expounded already elsewhere, saving that it is to be noted, that here is a covert force in the word *together*, or *at once;* for it both shews, that war was waged against him by a great multitude, and also that he was not so abashed with fear, but that he believed that all of them might easily be overthrown at one blow, as soon as God should lift up his hand. Whereas they are said to seek David's harm, therein appears their cruel hatred. And in that they exalt or vaunt themselves, it is a token of pride. Therefore, to make them hated of God, he says, they are full of disdain and scornfulness. Now, then, seeing that this form of praying was devised by the Holy Ghost, no doubt but all the proud shall come to such end as is here predicted; namely, to turn back with shame and reproach.

27 *Let them rejoice and be glad, &c.*] Fitly also may these two words be translated in the future tense, no less than in the mood of wishing; but because it is no matter of great weight, I leave it undecided. For David commends the deliverance which he wishes for at God's hand, by the fruit thereof: namely, because it shall be a general occasion of joy and good hope to all the godly, and at the same time shall stir them up to set forth the praises of God. And he attributes to the faithful this feeling, that they desire that the right of an innocent man should remain to him; for although David were commonly sore hated, because the rude and unskilful were infected by false reports, yet is it certain that there were among the people some indifferent and upright judges, whom it grieved sorely, that a holy man, and such a one as was known to be a good man, should be oppressed unworthily and contrary to his desert. And surely humanity requires this: that whomsoever we see troubled wrongfully, if we are not able to help them, we should at least pity. He seems covertly to set the magnify-

ing of the Lord against the stateliness of the wicked, whereof he spake just now: for inasmuch as they obscure God's glory as much as in them lies, by their venturing upon all things, the faithful have very good reason to conceive this wish on the contrary part; that the majesty of God may shine forth, by shewing in very deed that he has a special regard of his servants, and loves their peace with all his heart. At length, in the close of this Psalm, he repeats that he will set forth God's righteousness, whereby he was preserved, with such commendation as is meet.

PSALM XXXVI.

Almost all are of opinion, that in this Psalm David doth generally commend God's goodness, in that of his favour and mercy he beareth with the reprobates, who nevertheless do wickedly despise him. But I think somewhat otherwise; that the holy prophet, being sore vexed by wicked and flagitious persons, complains of their depravity, and afterwards resorts to God's infinite goodness, wherewith he embraces not only all men without exception, but his own children peculiarly, so that he may take breath in this faith; namely, that at length he shall be delivered by God's favour; which is manifest by the closing passage, where he arms and fences himself against all the assaults of the ungodly, by reflecting that he is safe through the protection of God.

[*To the chief chanter. A Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord.*]

2 Ungodliness saith to the wicked in the midst of my heart, there is no fear of God before his eyes.

3 For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found out to hatred.

4 The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit; he hath left off to understand to do good.

5 He imagineth mischief upon his bed; he standeth a way that is not good, and he abhorreth not that which is evil.

2 *Ungodliness saith, &c.*] Why David is adorned with the title of the servant of God, only here and in the eighteenth Psalm, rather than elsewhere, is uncertain; saving that by getting the upperhand in an encounter above all others the most difficult, he proved himself an invincible champion of God. For we know how rare a virtue it is, at a time when ungodliness ranges without restraint, and overcasts us with its

mist, to look up to God's providence with the eyes of faith, which, framing our minds to patience, may keep us steadfast in godliness. Furthermore, the interpreters translate the first verse diversely. Word for word it is, *The saying of transgression,* or *transgression saith to the ungodly.* However, because ל is now and then put for בְּ, some translate it, *Ungodliness speaketh of the wicked man in my heart.* As if the prophet should say, he perceives thoroughly, by the wickedness which the ungodly commit, that they are touched with no fear of God. But as there is no need to depart from the proper signification of the words, I agree with others rather, that the prophet says, that the malice of the ungodly person, which seems to lie unknown, speaks aloud in his heart, and that he is a sure witness of what it suggests. And first it is to be noted, that the prophet speaks not of outward faults, but pierces to the very spring itself; as if he should say, Although the wicked cloak their malice with wily dissimulation, yet it is well enough known to me, so that methinks I hear it speaking. True it is, that because the ungodly and heathen run headlong into all kind of wickedness, as though they should never yield an account of it, such a judgment may be formed from their life. But this is more express; that their inward frowardness betrays itself openly to the servants of God. And David speaks not of all manner of transgressors, but of the abandoned despisers of God. For many wanton in their own vices, who, notwithstanding, are not possessed of this frantic fury. But when a man is hardened in sin, at length ungodliness puts this madness in his head, to despise God's judgment, and to run without fear, whithersoever his lust drives him. Therefore recklessness in sinning, especially being joined with contempt and mocking, is as it were the enchantment of Satan, which betrays a man in hopeless case. And although true religion keeps godly men's minds in the fear of God, and drives wicked thoughts far away; yet this prevents them not from clearly seeing in their hearts, how the ungodly are tossed about with horrible fury, while they neither regard God nor are afraid of his judgment. *No fear of God.* He shews briefly the end of evil suggestions; namely, that the sense both of good and evil being quenched or choked, they dare do anything, as though God sat not as judge in heaven. The meaning then, is this; Ungodliness talks to the wicked man in my heart, provoking him to stark madness, that he should cast away the fear of God, and give himself altogether to sinning: that is to say, It is as well known to me what the ungodly imagine in their hearts, as if God had set me as a witness and arbiter to uncover their hypocrisy,

whereby they think their detestable malice is buried deep. Then, that no fear of God restrains the wicked from sinning, springs from this secret talking to them, whereby their own depravity so blinds their understandings, that they give themselves full license, like brute beasts. And because the eyes are as it were the guides of life, and by their motion draw the other senses hither and thither; therefore the fear of God is said to be before men's eyes, when it rules their life, and bridles their lusts by opposing a barrier to them wheresoever they turn themselves. Therefore, by a contrary form of speaking, David means that the ungodly run at random licentiously, without regard of God, because their own depravity has made them stark blind.

3 *For he flattereth himself.*] He shews by their fruits or signs, that there is no fear of God among the wicked, because they delight themselves so in their wicked doings, that although all others abhor them, yet they continue in their own stubbornness, and harden themselves wilfully to go on still more. First he says they nourish their own vices by flatteries, lest they should be dissatisfied with themselves for sinning. But whereas he adds, *until their iniquities be found unto hatred,* by these words is denoted their obstinacy. For the meaning is, that while they falsely sooth themselves, they proceed so far, that their naughtiness is hateful to all men. Some translate it, *That he himself should find his own iniquity to hate it;* and their meaning is, that they run headlong without restraint, till satiety make them to loathe it. For there is none so depraved, but now and then he is dissatisfied with himself. But the former sense is the natural one; namely, that the ungodly, though they are hateful to all men, because their naughtiness, being once discovered and found out, stirs all men to choler, are touched with no misliking of themselves, but rather clap their hands for joy, while the people hiss at them and abhor their flagitious life. The prophet therefore condemns this madness of theirs, that the filthiness of their wicked doings, which offends all men, moves not themselves at all: because as much as in them lies, they abolish all difference of good and evil, and bring a stupor upon their conscience, lest it should stir them to amendment. Surely, this stupor is to be advisedly considered; namely, that men who are given up to a reprobate mind, although they provoke all other men to hate them, yet are deprived of the feeling of their own evils.

4 *The words of his mouth.*] Both the members of this verse may be referred to the same thing; namely, that deceiving with lies, they admit no light of understanding.

And truly I take this to be David's meaning; because he does not simply find fault with the ungodly for circumventing others with their wiles and fallacies; but rather, because there is nothing right and uncorrupted in them. We have said heretofore, that he treats not of sinful men, in whom there remains some seeds of God, but of the heathenish despisers, who are wholly given over to their own sins. Therefore he says that they have always false pretences in their mouth, wherewith they scoff at all sound doctrine. Afterwards he adds that they suppress all choice of good and evil, because they would not become better. We know that reason is the guide of men to do well. This, therefore, says he, the reprobates shun, lest it should compel them to amend their life. And we are taught by these words, that if at any time we step aside from the way, the only remedy is to open the eyes of our mind, that the discerning of good and evil may call us back from error; and contrariwise that when a man refuses understanding, it is a sign of a desperate state. In the next verse is noted, their inward malice and profound stubbornness. For it happens that many, though otherwise they are not of the worst disposition, slip and offend, because occasion offers itself on a sudden. But David says that the wicked brew devices of evildoing within themselves, even when they are out of the sight of men; and although they meet with no allurement, nor any evil example stir them up, they are authors and schoolmasters of mischief to themselves, without impulsion of any other thing. Moreover, seeing he gives this as a mark to know the rebrobates by, that they devise wickedness upon their bed; the faithful are taught to employ their musings far otherwise when they are alone; namely, to drive away evil thoughts from them manfully, by examining their own life. Afterwards is added their stubbornness, that they stand firm in their crooked and froward way; that is to say, that they harden themselves to sinning, wittingly and wilfully. And finally, here is added the reason why; namely, because evil displeases them not: for wilful blindness drives them headlong, so that they willingly yield themselves slaves to wickedness. Now let us consider the contrast between the castaways and the faithful. The former deceive themselves with false flatterings; but the latter are severe censors towards themselves. The former lay the reins on their neck, to run headlong into vice; the latter are restrained with the bridle of the fear of God. The former cloak or colour their offences with cavils, and turn the light into darkness; but the latter willingly acknowledge themselves to have sinned, and provoke themselves to repentance by candid

confession. The former reject all sound judgment; the latter covet always to come forth to the light of life. The former invent sundry ways of sinning upon their bed; but the latter take diligent heed to themselves, that they stir not up their lust to sin. The former drown themselves deep in contempt of God; but the latter willingly exercise themselves in disgust at their own misdeeds.

6 O Lord, thy mercy reacheth to the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.

7 Thy righteousness is as the mountains of God, thy judgments are a great deep; thou, O Lord, preservest both man and beast.

8 How precious is thy goodness, O God! therefore shall the sons of men trust in the shadow of thy wings.

9 They shall be satisfied with the fatness of thine house, and thou shalt give them drink out of the river of thy pleasures.

10 For with thee is the fountain of life, and in thy light shall light be seen.

6 *O Lord, thy mercy.*] The interpreters think that after David has shewn what great corruption and frowardness reigns everywhere in the world, he takes occasion therefrom to burst forth into admiration of God's incredible sufferance, in that he ceases not to shew his favour and goodwill towards mankind, though wallowing in a sink of iniquity. But I told you before, that I was somewhat of a different opinion. For after the prophet has treated of the exceeding great depravity of men, lest he himself also, being carried away as it were by the rage of a waterflood, might quail, he gathers up himself. For commonly, while we condemn the wicked, we suffer the contagion of their vices to insinuate itself into our minds, and scarce the hundredth person of us keeps himself pure and untainted in true godliness, after he has complained of the naughtiness of others. The sense then is, that although there appear a sad and horrible confusion, that may swallow up the godly minds like a huge gulf; yet, notwithstanding, David resolves that the world is full of God's goodness and righteousness, and that he governeth both heaven and earth with most perfect equity. And certainly, as often as the corruption of the world shocks and strikes our minds, we must beware that our thoughts stop not in the wickedness of

men, who mingle and confound all things: but in this troubled mist we must look up to the secret providence of God. Notwithstanding, David reckons up here, by the figure synecdoche, four virtues of God, signifying in brief that we must consider God's inestimable power and might as joined with corresponding righteousness, although the fleshly understanding suggest that the world is tossed at a venture. In saying that God's goodness reaches to the heavens, he means that it matches the very heavens in height. For the same reason he adds, that his truth reaches unto the clouds. Moreover, *truth* in this place is taken either for the faithfulness which God exhibits in his promises, or else for his just government, wherein his rightfulness is thoroughly seen to be pure, and utterly free from deception. But many other places compel me to refer it to his promises, in keeping whereof God continues consistently faithful. And immediately after, there follows a commendation of his righteousness, which he likens to the high mountains; for we know that the Hebrews term divine whatsoever excels, because his glory shines forth more clearly there. Last of all, he says that God's judgments are like the great and bottomless deeps; by which words he gives us to understand that wheresoever we cast our eyes, upward and downward, all things are ordered by the just judgment of God. This place is wont to be cited in a far other sense; namely, that God's judgments far exceed our capacity, and are more hidden, than that the reason of them may be attained unto; and the similitude of an abyss is not inaptly applied to this purpose. Notwithstanding, it is to be gathered from the text, that David's words have a larger scope; namely, that although never so great a gulf of wickedness burst out among men, and overflow the whole earth, yet is the bottomless depth of God's providence greater, so that he disposeth and ruleth all things rightfully. Therefore, as often as our faith wavers in this blind and mysterious medley, let it come to our remembrance that throughout the whole governance of the world, God's judgments are worthily compared to a bottomless deep, which fills and possesses both heaven and earth, that it may swallow up all our cares and troubles. Whereas he adds, in the end of the verse, that God preserveth both men and beasts, it makes to this purpose; that since God vouchsafeth to extend his care even to the brute beasts, much more doth he provide for the affairs of men. And truly, as often as any doubting of God's providence creeps upon us, it behoves us to set this shield before us; that it cannot come to pass that God, who giveth food to the cattle, and maintaineth them in their state, should neglect mankind. For whereas

some expound this word *beasts* allegorically of beastly men, I reject it as too forced.

8 *How precious is thy goodness.*] Some expound it, that the mercy of God is precious, and the children of men precious that put their trust in it: but it is far from the words of the text. Too subtly also do some others expound it, that God's mercy is exceeding great towards the gods, that is to say, towards both angels and also the children of men. And I marvel that the Rabbins weary themselves so much in forging comments, seeing that the meaning of the prophet is clear of itself; namely, that because God's mercy excels and shews itself mightily, therefore the children of men put their trust in the shadow of it. For seeing that David has hitherto commended the goodness of God, which sheddeth itself upon all creatures, rightly, in my judgment, do others think that he treats here of his peculiar favour wherewith he embraceth his own children. For although the expression seems to treat generally of all the sons of men; yet the things that follow soon after, agree properly with the faithful alone. And so he names them purposely, to commend the grace of God, in that he disdaineth not to gather the mortal offspring of Adam under his wings; as it is said in Psalm viii. 5, *What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?* Now then we have the substance of this passage; that although the ungodly wanton profligately in their own wickedness, yet this temptation hinders not the faithful, trusting in God's goodness, from casting themselves upon his fatherly care: the taste of which goodness, the minds of the wicked, out of taste as they are, never perceive, that being brought from thence unto faith they might rest under the shadow of God's wings. The likening to wings is common enough in the scriptures, whereby God expresseth that we are no less cherished under his protection, than chickens are under their mother: and so he allureth us familiarly and gently unto him.

9 *They shall be satisfied.*] I doubt not but that by the fatness of God's house, he maens the abundance of all good things; which is not set forth indifferently for all men, but laid up in store for his children that yield themselves wholly to his protection. Some restrain it to spiritual graces; but to me it seems more likely, that under it are comprehended all God's benefits, that pertain as well to the use of this present life, as to the eternal and heavenly blessedness; saving that it is to be noted, that they are thus joined with the pure understanding of faith, whereby it comes to pass that we enjoy them rightly and lawfully to our own welfare. For when the ungodly glut themselves with the abundance

of God's benefits, their flesh indeed is fatted as it were swines' flesh, but their soul is always famished. Only the faithful, as I said, are satisfied with God's liberality, because it is a pledge to them of his fatherly love towards them. By *meat and drink*, is denoted complete and perfect fulness; and by the name of *river* plenteous abundance.

10 *For with thee is the, &c.*] He confirms the former doctrine, the knowledge whereof is so profitable that no words can express it. For as the unbelievers defile the singular good gifts of God by their wicked abuse of them, unless we hold to the difference that I have set down, it were better for us to perish a hundred times for hunger, than to feed abundantly of God's bounteousness. Therefore whereas the unbelievers in nowise acknowledge themselves to have their moving, living, and being, in God; but rather surmise themselves to stand by their own power, David here from the experience of the godly, and as it were in their person, affirms that the fountain of life is in God; whereby he means that there is not a drop of life to be found without him, or which flows not out of his grace. In the metaphor of *light*, there is a more express force; namely, that men are void of light, saving so far forth as the Lord shineth into them. Now if this may well be asserted of the light of this life, how shall our eyes serve us to behold the heavenly life, unless the Spirit of God enlighten us? For we must hold that men are in suchwise endued with understanding by nature, that *the light shineth in darkness, which the darkness comprehendeth not;* but the enlightening of them is a supernatural gift. In the meanwhile, none but the godly perceive how they borrow light of God, that they may not lie buried in darkness.

11 Extend thy mercy to them that know thee, and thy righteousness to such as be of a right heart.

12 Let not the foot of pride come upon me, and let not the hand of the ungodly move me.

13 There are they fallen that work iniquity; they are cast down, and could not stand.

11 *Extend thy, &c.*] Now David turns himself to praying. First he requires in general that God should continue his mercy towards all the godly; and afterwards he furthers his own cause, calling upon God for help against his enemies. Moreover they err over-childishly, who say that God stretcheth forth his mercy, because it reacheth above the heavens. For where David spake so just now, he meant not,

as is said, to enclose it within heaven; but he affirms simply that it was spread abroad everywhere. Now in this place he wishes nothing else, but that God should continue his mercy towards the godly, even to the end. Hereunto he joins righteousness, as the effect of its proper cause. And we have said elsewhere, that God's righteousness appeareth in this, that he taketh upon him the defence of those that are his, defending their innocence, revenging and repressing their wrongs, and proving himself faithful by maintaining their welfare. Now then seeing he doeth all this for them freely, justly does David begin at his goodness, and place the same foremost in the array, that we may learn to depend upon his mere grace. Now are the characteristics to be marked, whereby he describes the faithful; namely, that they know God, and secondly, are of a right heart. For hereby we gather, that true godliness springs from knowing God; and again, that it cannot be but that the light of faith must frame our hearts to rightfulness. By the way it is to be considered, that we do then know God aright, when we yield him his honour; that is, in suchwise that our trust may recline upon him.

12 *Let not the foot of pride, &c.*] As I told you even now, he applies to his own person the prayer which he had devised. But by conceiving a wish for all the children of God in common, he was minded to shew that he desired nothing privately to himself, but only wished God's favour, because he was one of the number of the godly and upright, who have an eye unto God. He has put *the foot of pride* and *the hand of the ungodly*, all in the same sense. For as the wicked rush boldly to the destruction of good men, lifting up their feet to tread upon them, and having their hands ready to work them any mischief; David beseeches God to hamper as well their feet as their hands; and so he confesses that he shall be in danger of their pride, railings, and violence, unless God succour him betimes.

13 *There are they fallen, &c.*] Upon his prayer he gathers confidence, doubting not but that he has already obtained his request. And thus we see how the certainty of faith directs the saints to praying. Furthermore, to hearten himself the more assuredly to hope well, he does as it were point with his finger to the fall of the ungodly, though it be as yet hidden. For the adverb *there* is not superfluous; for while the ungodly are swelling with insolence at their good fortune, and while the world claps its hands at them, David descries their destruction afar off, as it were from a watchtower, and gives determinate sentence of it as assuredly as if it were close at hand. Further, that we also may be

assured of the same confidence, let us bear in mind, that they do amiss who determine the junctures of time by the heat of their own desires; and that we must give space to God's providence, to rise up to judgment when it shall be due time according to his discretion. When he says they were *thrust down*, he means that they totter in a slippery place, so that their felicity is in nowise stable. In the end he adds, that their fall shall be to utter destruction, so that they may never hope for recovery.

PSALM XXXVII.

This Psalm, the title whereof shews it to be David's, contains a most profitable doctrine. For as the faithful, as long as they wander as pilgrims in the world, see things strangely confused; unless they assuage their grief with hope of better issue, their hearts must needs faint from time to time. The more boldly any man despises God, and sells himself to all iniquity, so much the more happily he seems to live. And seeing that prosperity appears to be a token of God's favour towards the ungodly; what may be gathered thereby, but either that the world is ruled by chance, and that fortune bears the sovereignty; or else that God maketh no difference between the good and the bad? Against these assaults of temptation, doth God's Spirit fence us and strengthen us in this Psalm. For however great the prosperity the wicked enjoy for a time, he avouches their felicity to be but transient and shadowy, and that therefore they are cursed themselves, and the gladness is cursed wherein they take pride; but the pious and holy worshippers of God are blessed, even in their extreme miseries, because they are regarded of God, who will relieve them in due season at length. This truly is a paradox, which the understanding of the flesh shrinks from. For as good men suffer hunger a long while, languishing long under many miseries, and are loaded with reproaches and wrongs, while the wicked and profligate triumph, and delight themselves in pleasures; who might not be of opinion, that God careth not for men's matters? So much the more profitable then, as I said even now, is the doctrine of this Psalm; which, calling off our thoughts from the present aspect of things, bids us settle ourselves upon God's providence, so long till he reach forth his hand to his servants, and demand a straight account of the ungodly, as of thieves and traitors that have foully abused his fatherly loving-kindness.

[*A Psalm of David.*]

1 Fret not thyself because of the wicked; neither be thou envious of them that work iniquity.

2 For they shall soon be cut down like grass; and they shall wither as the green grass.

3 Put thy trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and be fed faithfully.

4 Delight in the Lord, and he will give thee thy heart's desire.

5 Commit thy ways unto the Lord, and trust in him; and he will bring it to pass.

6 And he will bring forth thy righteousness as the light; and thy judgments as the noon day.

1 *Fret not thyself.*] David takes this for a general principle; that there is no reason why the children of God should be grieved or disquieted because of the pleasant estate of the wicked, in which they sooth themselves sweetly, because it shall soon fade away; and on the contrary, that although the faithful are distressed for a time, yet the end of them is such, that they ought of right to be contented with their lot. And all this depends upon God's providence; because, unless we be persuaded that the world is ruled by his rightful governance, our minds will soon stagger, and at length fail altogether. Moreover David restrains two faulty affections, which nevertheless are closely allied one to another, and the one generates the other; first, that the faithful should not fret at the reprobates, and secondly, that unhallowed envy should not goad them. For first, when they see the world go well with the ungodly, because it were an easy matter to gather therefrom that God regardeth not men's affairs, it is to be feared lest they should shake off the fear of God, and be estranged from faith. The other temptation follows upon it, because example excites them that they should involve themselves in the fellowship of their misdoings. This is the natural sense. For whereas some translate אל תתחר, *intermeddle not thyself*, it is constrained, and it may be disproved by the text; for surely in the eighth verse, where mention is made of hastiness and anger in express words, it were against reason to draw this same word to another sense, which is subjoined in the same meaning and to the same end. Again, David observes an excellent order; because that when the prosperity of the ungodly has moved us to displeasure, soon the falling into envy is too easy. First, therefore, he warns us to beware that their transitory or rather imaginative felicity irritate not our minds; and secondly, that envy move us not to sinning. In the second verse is added a reason; because that

if they flourish to-day like the green flower, to-morrow they shall be cut down and withered. No marvel though this similitude be common in the scriptures, because it is very apposite; for we see how ready the sap of grass is to wither away, which being cast down with one blast of wind, or parched with the heat of the sun, fadeth of itself without the hand of man. But David tells us plainly that God's judgment shall be instead of a scythe to mow them down, that they may wither away in a moment.

3 *Put thy trust in the Lord.*] Now he comes down to the second member; that all things shall go well and luckily with the faithful, because they are under God's protection. Further, as nothing is better, or more to be desired, than to be fostered under God's protection, he exhorts them to put their trust in him, and at the same time, also, to follow after goodness. And it is not for nought, that he begins at the doctrine of faith; for nothing is more difficult for men, than to abide with quiet and settled minds, and not to be shaken with any disquietude, while they are tossed from post to pillar in the world. And forasmuch as they see wicked men grow rich by dishonest acts, and to increase and purchase authority by licentiousness in sinning, it is a matter no less difficult to stand steadfast in the maintenance of virtue. Besides this, it is not enough to set light by such things as are commonly wont to be coveted with so much eagerness. For some of the philosophers were endued with such greatness of mind, that they despised riches unlawfully gotten, and abstained from guile and force; yea, and straightly reproved the empty splendour of the wicked, which the common sort of men fondly admire. But because they were void of faith, they defrauded God of his honour, whereby it came to pass that true felicity was hid from them. Now as he makes his beginning at faith, that he may shew that God is the author of all good things, and that there is no prosperous success to be looked for, but from his blessing alone; so is the annexing of the party's good behaviour to be noted; because whosoever commits himself to God's protection, will live uprightly and innocently, and give his mind to welldoing. *Dwell in the land.* He expresses himself more significantly than if he promised that the righteous should dwell in the land. For it is just as if he should bring a man to the thing present, and establish him in possession of it. Nevertheless, in these words he declares that their state shall be lasting; because although they are but strangers and sojourners in the world, yet the Lord covereth them with his hand, that they may rest quietly. Which he confirms again by the next portion, *be fed faithfully.* For

he bids them take their ease without care or disquietness, upon assurance of God's safe keeping. It is a strange thing that the interpreters should wrest and wring this place with their sundry expositions. Some take the word *feed* actively; and to others, *to feed upon faith* imports as much as to cherish God's promises in their hearts. To others it seems that David commands us to feed our brethren with faith, by ministering to them the pure word of God wherewith their souls are nourished spiritually. Others take *faith* for uncorruptness, so that, *to feed upon faith* would be to behave oneself truthfully among men. But the circumstance of the place requires indispensably, which the property of the Hebrew tongue allows, that רעה should be taken passively, *to be fed.* And hereunto incline the greater part of interpreters, who, notwithstanding, afterwards disagree. For some of them adopt the interpretation that we are fed with faith, when God's promises suffice us, so that we are as it were filled with them. Others translate it, *feed thyself with the fruit of faith;* because God will shew in very deed, that credit was not given to his word in vain. Others resolve it thus; *let truth be thy meat,* and let nothing delight thee more than to deal simply and plainly with thy neighbours. Similar to this is another exposition, although it differ somewhat; *live not upon spoil, but be content with lawful sustenance.* Surely it is a shame and disgrace that learned men have so lost themselves in a matter perfectly clear. For had not each man's ambition moved him to seek some new device, they would at once have met with the native meaning of the prophet, which is this, *Dwell in the land, that thou mayest enjoy it in steadfast quietness.* For the word אמונה signifies not only *truth* or *faith,* but also *steady continuance.* And who sees not that after the possession of the land was given to the righteous, this latter member was added as an exposition of that which went before?

4 *Delight in the Lord.*] This delighting is set against the vain and deceitful enticements of the world, which so intoxicate the worldly, that despising God's blessing, they dream of none other blessedness than such as thrusts itself before their eyes for the moment. And this contrast between the giddy and brainsick joys wherewith the world beguiles itself, and the true rest wherein the faithful hold themselves, is to be marked advisedly; because whether all things smile upon us, or whether the Lord exercise us with misfortunes, we must always hold to this principle; that as the Lord is our portion, the lot is fallen excellently for us, according as we have seen, Ps xvi. 5. Wherefore we must continually

call our minds back hither with diligence; namely, that it is not well with us, save so far forth as God is merciful to us, so that the joy that we conceive of his fatherly goodwill towards us, may exceed all the pleasures of the world. To the commandment is added a promise; that if we are contented with God alone, he will give us liberally whatsoever we shall wish. Not that the faithful do forthwith obtain whatsoever comes uppermost in their mind to crave; like as neither should it be to their profit for God to gratify their unhallowed desires; but David's meaning was only this, that if we settle our thoughts upon God alone, while others gad after their own fantasies, all other things will come to us in their season.

5 *Commit thy ways, &c.*] He expresses and confirms the former sentence more clearly. For that God may accomplish our desires, it behoves us to cast our cares upon him with hope and patience. Therefore we learn hereby how we may be quiet in our minds among the troubles, dangers, and the storms of vexation. No man doubts but that *ways* are taken here for *affairs* or *businesses*. Therefore that man commits his ways unto the Lord, who commits the issue of his doings to God's pleasure, and patiently preparing himself to accept either prosperity or adversity, unloads his cares, and whatsoever burden else presses him, into his lap; which in French we call *sui remettre ses affaires*. And in this respect again he bids him trust in him; meaning that rightful honour is yielded unto God, by trusting to him only to govern our life. And so he remedies a common disease, whereof almost all men are sick. For whence comes it that the children of God envy the reprobates, and often waver or stagger to and fro, and yield themselves to excess of sorrow, and now and then also fret and murmur; but because they wrap themselves in endless cares, and desiring greedily to look to themselves without God, plunge themselves as it were into a bottomless deep, or at least accumulate upon themselves a huge heap of cares, under which they are fain to sink at last. David, to remedy this vice, warns us, that if we will take upon us the government of our own life, and shift for ourselves, as though we were able to bear so great a burden, we are vastly deceived; and therefore that the only remedy is, to cast our eyes upon God's providence, and from thence to fetch comfort for all our griefs. Whosoever obeys this counsel, shall wind himself out of the horrible labyrinth wherein all men weary themselves in vain; because when God shall have taken upon him the ruling of our affairs, there shall never want good success. For whence comes it that he forsakes and

disappoints us; but because we shut the way against him, by being overwise in our own matters. Wherefore if we will give him leave to deal, he will do his part thoroughly, and not disappoint our hope, even as he justly punisheth our unbelief.

6 *He will bring forth, &c.*] This is an anticipation whereby he prevents the doubts that commonly trouble us when we seem to lose our labour in worshipping God purely, and in dealing justly with our neighbour; or rather when our innocence is either exposed to the calumnies of the wicked, or else is hurtful to us among men, and therefore is thought to be despised of God. David therefore denies that God will suffer our righteousness to lie always hid in the dark, but will be a maintainer of it, that it may shine forth and be seen; that is to say, when he renders us such reward as we wish. Moreover, he alludes to the night, the darkness whereof is dissipated by the sudden break of the day; as if he should say, As often as we are grieved unjustly, and God hides from our view that he maintaineth our innocence, there is no reason why this reverse should more trouble us than does the darkness of the night that covers the earth, because the expectation of the daylight sustains our hope.

7 Hold thy peace unto the Lord, and tarry his leisure, fret not thyself at him that proceedeth prosperously in his way, at the man that bringeth his wickedness to effect.

8 Cease from wrath, away with chafing; and be not angry, for fear lest thou sin.

9 For evildoers shall be cut up; but they that tarry the Lord's leisure shall inherit the land.

10 Yet a while, and the ungodly shall be quite gone: and thou shalt look to his place, and shalt not find him.

11 But the meek shall inherit the land; and shall take their pleasure in the multitude of peace.

7 *Hold thy peace, &c.*] He follows up the same doctrine; that is to say, that we should patiently and mildly abide whatsoever is wont to disquiet our minds: for amid the inquietudes of so many encounters, a man had need of no small patience. And by the metaphor of holding one's peace, which often occurs in the scriptures, he declares most aptly the nature of faith: for like as our affections

clamour against God, so faith, settling us to a quiet obedience, appeases all tumults in our hearts. By this word, therefore, David forbids us to be troubled as the unbelievers are, or to set ourselves against his appointment with fretting; and to give place to him with quiet minds, that he may go through with his work in silence. Now since חול signifies sometimes to sorrow, and sometimes to wait, some take the word התחולל in this place for *to sorrow moderately*, or *to bear sorrow patiently*. Also it might be translated more simply, *to sorrow before God*, that he might be witness of all our troubles; because when the faithless stand doubting, they rather murmur against him than utter their complaints before him. Still, as the other sense is more received; namely, that David exhorts us to hope and sufferance, I willingly embrace it. For Isaiah also, xxx. 15, joins hope to silence in the selfsame sense. Afterwards he repeats what he had spoken in the first verse, *Fret not thyself at the man that hath lucky success*, or that brings his ways to the end that he wished; nor *at the man that behaveth himself wickedly*, or that brings his devices to pass; which second agrees better with the text. Truly I confess, that the word מזמות is most commonly taken in ill part, for craftiness and hurtful cavillings. But, as זמם now and then signifies to think in general, the property of the Hebrew tongue will bear this sense, that *to do one's devices* imports as much as to bring to effect what one has purposed. And we see these two things joined together; that is, to dispose or prosper one's ways according to his desire, and to bring his devices to pass: for there is a sore stumblingblock cast in our way, when fortune smiles upon the ungodly, as though God favoured the wickedness of evildoers; yea rather, then is wrath kindled in us. David, therefore, being not content with a short warning, tarries somewhat longer upon this matter. For the accumulation of words that follows in the next verse is not in vain, where he puts a bridle upon anger, allays rage, and assuages displeasure: but, as need require, he applies the most remedies to a disease that is hard to be healed. And by this means he puts us in mind, how ready we are to be provoked, and how forward we are to conceive displeasure, unless we compel our turbulent affections to obedience, by wrestling stoutly against them. Now then, although the faithful subdue not the headiness of the flesh without trouble and painstaking, when the prosperity of the wicked stirs them to impatience, yet this repetition teaches, that we must persevere in our wrestling; because, if we stand to it thoroughly, our endeavours shall not be vain in the end. I translate the last member otherwise than the

rest of interpreters do. For they translate it, *at least to sinning*, as if David should will us to mitigate anger, that it should not break out into mischief. But seeing that אַךְ is often affirmative, I doubt not but David teaches that it cannot be, but that if we prevent not our anger quickly and out of hand, it will force us to offend; as it is said in another Psalm, *God will break the cords of the ungodly, lest the righteous should stretch out their hand to iniquity;* Ps. cxxv. 3.

9 *For the evildoers shall be, &c.*] Not without cause does he inculcate the same thing repeatedly; namely, that the joyful and prosperous fortune which the ungodly enjoy, is but a ghost or phantom, because the first sight of it dazzles our senses, so that they cannot take heed to the end of it, according whereunto we ought to judge. And the contrast is to be marked between the two members. First, in saying that the ungodly shall be cut up, he gives us an inkling, that they flourish fresh and green, till the ripe time of their destruction come; and afterwards, by allotting the land to the faithful by right of inheritance, he means that they shall live in suchwise, that the blessing of God shall follow them even to their grave. Moreover, as I taught you even now, man's estate is to be estimated by the end of it. Also, by the title which he gives to the children of God, we gather that they are trained in a hard warfare, that their faith may be tried; for he terms them not righteous, or godly, but *tarriers of the Lord's leisure.* But to what purpose should he speak of this tarrying, if they groaned under the burden of the cross? Howbeit, the possession of the land, which he promises to the children of God, is not always set before their eyes; both because they must wander in it as pilgrims, and also the Lord suffereth them not to have an abiding-place anywhere, but rather shifteth them to and fro, that they should travel the more cheerfully to the resting-place of heaven: for the flesh desires to build its nest for ever here; and if we were not shifted hither and thither without being suffered to rest, we should by little and little forget heaven, and the everlasting heritage. However, in this unrest, the possession of the land, whereof David makes mention, is not taken away; for they know most certainly that they are the heirs of the world. Whence it comes to pass that they eat their bread with a quiet conscience; and although they suffer scarcity, yet doth God succour their necessities in good time. Finally, although the ungodly go about to thrust them out of the world, and account them unworthy to live upon the earth, yet doth God stretch out his hand and cover them: in short, so sustaineth them with

his power, that they live more at ease in banishment, than the ungodly do in their nest, whereunto they are fast tied. And so this benefit, which David commends, is partly inward and hidden, because the dulness of our flesh conceives not what it is to possess the land; and yet the faithful perceive in very deed, and by evident effect, that the same is not promised them in vain, because, having fastened their anchorhold in God, they pass their life quietly from day to day: and God sheweth by the very deed, that the shadow of his hand is sufficient to defend them.

10 *Yet a while.*] It is a confirmation of the former sentence. For it had been an easy matter to object, that we see the world in far other case than David speaks of, because the ungodly riot in their pleasures, and the faithful pine away piteously in continual languishing. David, therefore, calling us back from a precipitate judgment, wills us to be quiet for a little while, till the Lord pluck them up by the root, and shew the efficacy of his grace towards us. The wisdom, then, that he requires in the faithful, is that they should suspend their judgment for awhile, until God shew out of heaven that the full time is come; and so they should not stop at every trifle, but stretch out their mind to the providence of God. Whereas now, instead of *tarriers of God's leisure,* he puts *the meek,* he grounds himself upon very good reason: for unless a man believe that God preserveth those that are his, in a wonderful manner, as if he preserved sheep among wolves, he will be for ever essaying to repel force by force. Hope alone, therefore, breeds of itself meekness; because that, by bridling the headiness of the flesh, and allaying the heat thereof, it teaches equanimity and patience to those that submit themselves unto God. And from hence Christ seemeth to have taken that which is written Matt. v. 5. Now, then, although the word *peace* be generally taken among the Hebrews for every prosperous issue of things, yet another sense will agree better with this place; namely, that while the ungodly shall work trouble to themselves, and while God wrappeth them round about with fearfulness, the faithful shall delight themselves in much quietness. Not that they are void of all disquietude; but because inward calmness of mind shall sustain them, so that accounting all the trouble which they endure, to be but for a moment, they rejoice in the meanwhile, in hope of the quietness that is promised.

12 The ungodly deviseth against the righteous, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth.

13 But the Lord shall laugh him to scorn, for he seeth that his day is coming.

14 The ungodly draw their swords, and bend their bow, to throw down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of a right conversation.

15 Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bow shall be broken.

12 *The ungodly, &c.*] He anticipates that which might have been objected against the last sentence. For where is calm quietness and mirth, when the wicked play the madmen and practise all that may be against the children of God? Again, how shall they hope well for the time to come, who see themselves beset with many deaths? David therefore answers, that although their life be assaulted with sundry perils, yet, for all that ever the ungodly can devise, they are safe by the help and protection of God, and shall continue safe for evermore. And so David's purpose is to remedy our fear, lest the malice of the ungodly should terrify us above measure, as though we were given up to them to do what they list with us. Now in saying that *they devise schemes insidiously, and gnash with their teeth:* he confesses both that they are freighted with wiles to do mischief, and also that they burn with venomous spitefulness and rage. But when he has granted this, he adds forthwith, that their endeavours shall be to none effect; howbeit, he seems to give but a cold comfort to our sorrows; for he says no more than that God laugheth. But if he have a care of our safety, wherefore maketh he not haste to withstand them betimes, and wherefore setteth he not himself stoutly against the fury of our enemies? But this is the proper trial of our patience, as hath been said, Psalm ii. 4, that God steppeth not forth armed at once, to put the ungodly to flight, but winketh for a time, and withholdeth his hand. Now, forasmuch as the carnal sense thinks him to be then overslow; and, from that delay, concludes that he contenteth himself with his own ease, and neglecteth men's affairs; to behold him laughing by faith, is a comfort of no small force; for thereupon we conclude for a certainty that he standeth not still idly in heaven, nor, shutting his eyes, resigneth to chance the government of the world; but maketh delay on purpose, because he despiseth their fond foolishness. And lest the flesh should murmur again, why it should please God rather to laugh, than to revenge; a reason is added, because he seeth the day of their destruction at hand. For whence comes it, that the shameful state of things

troubles us, but because, when we see not redress in all haste, straightways we despair of better things? But he that sees the executioner stand with his sword drawn, at the wicked man's back, longs no more for revenge, but rather enjoys the gladsome sight. David, therefore, warns us that it is not meet that God, who seeth the ungodly to be near their destruction, should be angry after our manner. For here is an implied difference between God, and men who are blind in the midst of troubles, and cannot laugh for thought and care, but rather murmur and chafe for weariness of delay. Nevertheless, it is not enough to know that the case stands otherwise with God, than with us; except we learn to weep patiently in his laughter, that our tears may be a sacrifice of obedience. In the mean time we must beseech him to enlighten us with his light: for so it will come to pass, that the beholding of his laughter by our faith, will make us partakers thereof, even in the midst of our heaviness. Some refer these two verses to another purpose; as if David should say, that the godly live so happy a life, that the evil men envy them. But the readers will now easily perceive that the exposition comes nothing near to the meaning of the prophet.

14 *The ungodly draw, &c.*] Now David proceeds further; that is, that the ungodly, being armed with sword and bow, menace death to the children of God; and this does he to prevent temptations, which otherwise must needs throw us down. For God's promises have not place in rest and quietness, but in terrible conflicts. And therefore he teaches, that the righteous are not deprived of that peace, of which he treated a little before, although the wicked threaten them present death. And the sentence must be explained in this wise; Albeit that sinners draw their swords and bend their bows to destroy the righteous, yet whatsoever they attempt, shall turn to the destruction of themselves. And the expressions are to be noted; whereby is expressed the miserable state of the righteous, until God at length succour them. For they are called needy and poor; and afterwards they are likened to victims, because they are not able to withstand the violence of their enemies, but rather lie oppressed under their feet. Whence it follows, that in this Psalm there is no such felicity promised them, which may appear to proceed with uniform tenor; but, in their miseries and afflictions, there is set before them a hope of joyful issue, whereby to hold themselves up. Howbeit, as it often happens, that the evildoers also are hated and troubled for their own iniquity, he adds, *of right conversation;* meaning thereby, that they are afflicted without deserving;

before, he had said *of a right heart;* by which words was commended the inward pureness of the heart: and now, he commends good behaviour in the outward duties of life. And so he shews, not only that they are wrongfully afflicted, because they had not provoked their enemies by any misdeeds; but also, that when they were provoked by injuries, yet did they not step aside from upright dealing. Moreover David speaks not now of God's laughter, but denounces vengeance against the ungodly; according also, as we have seen in the second Psalm, and the fourth verse, that after God, by winking at the matter awhile, had suffered the ungodly to run riot, in the end he spake to them in his wrath to overthrow them. The effect is, that the ungodly shall so little prevail, that the sword which they had drawn shall return into their own bowels, and their bow shall be broken in pieces.

16 Better is a small thing to the righteous, than is the wealthiness of the ungodly great ones.

17 For the arms of the ungodly shall be broken, but the Lord holdeth up the righteous.

18 The Lord knoweth the days of the righteous and their inheritance shall be everlasting.

19 They shall not be ashamed in the time of adversity; and in the days of famine they shall have enough.

16 *Better is a small thing, &c.*] This verse, without any probable cause, is expounded diversely. Indeed the word המון signifies, sometimes a great throng of men, and sometimes, abundance of things; now and then, also, an adjective of the plural number is joined to a substantive of the singular number. But they that draw David's words to this sense, that a few righteous persons are better than a huge multitude of the ungodly, openly distort them, and mar the whole sentence. Neither admit I that which others teach; namely, that a little, which the just man possesses, is better than the great abundance of the ungodly; for no necessity compels to wrest the word רבום, which signifies many men, or great men, into the word המון, contrary to the principles of grammar. And therefore I doubt not, but that David compares the slender ability of one righteous man with the riches and wealth of many wicked men. Nevertheless, the adjective רבים may aptly be taken for great men, that excel in authority and power. Surely David's intent is by no means obscure; namely, that although the ungodly excel in

the world, and are stored with great abundance, and trust in their own riches, yet is a little that the just man possesses, more worth than all their heaps. And we gather, that David speaks not so much of the outward state, as of God's secret blessing, which enriches the righteous indeed; because, although they live but from hand to mouth, yet are they fed from heaven, as it were with manna; whereas the ungodly are ever hungry, or else rot, like men buried, in their abundance. Whereto also pertains the reason that is added in the next verse; that is, that there is no stableness in the world, except it be sustained by the hand of God. And he tells us plainly, that none but the righteous are pillared up by God, and that the strength of the ungodly shall be broken. And here again we see, that if we will estimate true felicity rightly and wisely, we must lift up our eyes to the time to come, or rather, level them at the secret grace of God, and his hidden judgments. For unless we are persuaded that God cherisheth us in his fatherly bosom, our slenderness will always be troublesome unto us. And, on the other hand, unless we bear in mind this breaking of the arms of the ungodly, we shall make great account of their estate. But if this doctrine be thoroughly settled in the hearts of the faithful, then, as soon as they shall have learned to lean unto the support of God's blessing, the delight and joy they shall experience from their little store shall be equal to the magnanimity with which they shall look down, as it were from an eminence, upon the lofty heaps of treasure in which the ungodly glory. By the way, we are warned, that as long as the ungodly lean to their own strength, we must wait till God break the arms of them; and the best comfort of our infirmity is this, that God himself holdeth us up.

18 *The Lord knoweth, &c.*] Not without cause does David so often inculcate this point, that the righteous are therefore blessed, because the Lord provideth for their necessities. We see how forward men's dispositions are to doubting, and how superfluous cares torture them, which they can neither end nor moderate; meanwhile, another vice creeps upon them, in being more anxious for the future than they ought; and yet, how much soever they excel in sharpness and industry, they make slips from time to time in forming their plans, and then, not unfrequently, fail of success. Wherefore, nothing is more profitable than to have God's providence set continually before our eyes, which only can best provide for us. In this respect now, David says that the days of the righteous are known unto God; that is to say, that it is not unknown unto him, what perils

they are subject to, and what succour they have need of. And the use of this doctrine must be adapted to all and every change that menaces destruction to us. For howsoever we are harassed and driven about, and howsoever the very fluctuation of our state sets present death before our faces every moment, this comfort must suffice us; not only that our days are numbered by God, but also that the sundry casualties which we must undergo, are known unto him. Seeing, then, that God keepeth such watch for the maintenance of our welfare in this our pilgrimage, we ought to be no less quieted in our minds than if we were in an estate of inheritance. For as we are regarded of God, David gathers that our heritage shall be everlasting. And in saying that the righteous are defended by God, he exhorts us to the pure and uncorrupt following of virtue. And if we covet to lie safe under God's protection, let us follow meekness, and away with that devilish proverb, "Among wolves we must howl."

19 *They shall not be ashamed, &c.*] This verse also shews that there is not promised to the faithful such exemption from all inconveniences as the flesh would desire, but such a deliverance, as though it be received in very deed, yet is it not tasted but by faith. For we must yoke these two things together; that as the faithful are mingled with the evildoers in this world, so hunger and adversities are common to them both; and the only difference betwixt them is, that God, reaching out his hand unto those that are his, in their need, forsaketh the ungodly. If any man object, that evil men often fare daintily at a time of famine, and pamper themselves largely while good men are pinched with hunger, I answer, that the fulness which is mentioned here, consists chiefly in this point, that whereas the faithful have but slender fare, or rather, are hungry and bare, and have much ado to get a poor living, yet doth God feed them no less than if they had much more plentiful abundance than the unbelievers have, who cram the whole world into their maws, and yet are never satisfied. Besides this, these temporal blessings, as we have said elsewhere, are not always open to view so that they should flow at one uniform rate. For although God's hand be open, yet are we straitened, and our own unbelief is no small hindrance to his bounteousness. Moreover, because our flesh would soon lose its vigour, God dealeth more sparingly; and lest he might corrupt us by indulgence, he schools us to frugality by bestowing penuriously what, otherwise, he was ready to lavish in full abundance. Assuredly, whosoever shall consider how forward all of us are to wantonness and pleasures, he shall

not marvel at the spare diet wherewith God exerciseth his own faithful ones. Howbeit, although God minister not so much as is enough to satisfy us to the full, yet, unless our own unthankfulness prevent us, we shall perceive, even in famine and utter scarcity, that he nourisheth us graciously and liberally.

20 But the ungodly shall perish; and the Lord's enemies shall be consumed as the preciousness of lambs; in the smoke shall they be consumed.

21 The ungodly borroweth, and payeth not again; but the righteous is merciful, and giveth.

22 For such as be blessed of God shall inherit the land; and such as be cursed of him shall be cut up.

20 *But the ungodly, &c.*] The causal particle כִּי, I interpret as put adversatively; unless, perhaps, it is preferred to go deeper for the meaning. But those contrasted circumstances form a suitable and consistent sense; namely, that the righteous have their fill in the time of dearth, while the ungodly perish in the midst of affluence; because, whereas they trust in their plenty, God by secret means bringeth them to nought. And in calling them God's enemies, he warns us that they are justly overwhelmed by the vengeance which they procure to themselves by their own wickedness. Whereas he says, they are *consumed as the preciousness of lambs,* some understand it to be spoken of the fat of them. But, seeing that יְקַר signifies excellentness, as I have said elsewhere, I doubt not but that he denotes the choice lambs themselves, and such as are of extraordinary fatness; which suits very well for the antithesis. For hereby we learn, what another prophet teaches likewise, that the ungodly are fatted against the day of slaughter, so that the more daintily they are treated, the sooner they may be destroyed. *To be consumed in the smoke* imports as much as to vanish away quickly; as if it had been said, there is no firmness or substance in them. They who by the term *preciousness* understand fat, expound it, to be consumed against the smoke, as fat melteth or wasteth away. But the readers see that the former interpretation suits better.

21 *The ungodly borroweth, &c.*] They are deceived that think in this place the ungodly are condemned for bad faith because they seize other men's goods by defrauding; and that, on the contrary, in the children of God is commended humanity, because they are ready to relieve the want of their

brethren. For the prophet rather commends the blessing of God towards the godly, and on the contrary attests that the ungodly have never enough. The effect then is, that God giveth abundantly to those that are his, from which they may be liberal to others; and that the ungodly are always hungry, so that their need drives them ever to craft and extortion. And in truth, if a veil of insensibility were not placed before our eyes, there are proofs of this to be seen daily. For though the ungodly have never so great abundance, yet their insatiable covetousness makes them seize on all they can, right and left, like robbers, and yet are never able to pay. But in the meanwhile God ministereth to his children, not only wherewith to serve their moderate uses, but also wherewith to help others. Truly I deny not that the wicked are blamed for defrauding their creditors by devouring all things wastefully, and also that the righteous are praised for using God's bounty to the right end. But the prophet's purpose is to shew, what God's blessing can do. And this meaning is better confirmed by the next verse, where the difference is put in the blessing or cursing of God. Therefore, if it be demanded whence the children of God have ability wherewith to help the needy and to exercise liberality, and why the ungodly run ever further and further in debt, the payment of which can never be wrung from them, David answers that the one are blessed of the Lord, and the other brought to utter ruin by his curse. Some translate the word מבורכיו actively, *blessing the righteous man;* but it is constrained and absurd. For the effect is, that whatsoever is needful to support life, and perform the duties of humanity, comes to us neither from the sky nor out of the earth, but flows from the favour of God alone; and that if he withdraw his grace, the wealth of the whole world cannot suffice us.

23 The steps of man are directed by the Lord, and he loveth his ways.

24 Though he fall he shall not be bruised, because the Lord putteth under his hand.

25 I have been young, and now am old; yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, and his seed beg their bread.

26 He is daily merciful and lendeth, and his seed is unto the blessing.

23 *The steps of man, &c.*] Some connect these two things; that the steps of the godly are directed by the grace of God,

that is to say, that men of their own power follow not what is just and rightful, further than the Spirit of the Lord governeth them; whence they gather the second, namely, that God favoureth and approveth that which is his own. But David continues simply the commendations of God's blessing towards the godly, in whom this is chiefly to be exalted, that whatsoever they take in hand, is directed to a happy and desirable end. But at the same time is to be noted the reason why God furthereth and prospereth all things in the race of our life; namely, because we attempt nothing which does not please him. For I take the word *and*, which is in the second part of the verse, to be put for this word *because*, and I resolve the sentence thus; because the way of the godly is acceptable to God, therefore he directeth their steps to a joyful end; so that the meaning is, because God seeth that the faithful deal with an upright conscience, and do not step aside from the way that he hath appointed, therefore he blesseth their enterprises. And surely, seeing that the prophet speaks generally, and yet it is certain that he means none but the faithful, the second member must needs be taken in way of exposition, and so the word *way* is put for the manner and course of living; as if he should say, that the godly purpose nothing but to frame their life according to God's calling, and to follow that which he commandeth. And I refer the word *steps* to the outward issues of things.

24 *Though he fall, &c.*] Commonly this verse has been taken for a proverb; that if the righteous man at any time offend, his fallings are not deadly. But this is no part of the mind of David, who preacheth of the happy state of the godly. Therefore the simple meaning of it is, that at such time as God afflicteth his servants with miseries, he doth at the same time mitigate them also, that they may not faint; according as Paul says, 2 Cor. iv. 9, *that they are cast down indeed, but yet perish not; and that they are in hazard, but yet are not forsaken.* Some say the righteous are not bruised, because their hearts fail them not; but rather, with invincible fortitude bear out whatsoever burden is laid upon them. And truly I confess, that the reason why they are not overwhelmed, is that they sink not under their burden from want of firmness. Nevertheless I extend the words yet further; namely, that the miseries of the godly are so tempered with God's fatherly mercy, that they cannot quail under their burden, nor, in falling, tumble down headlong. By which words we learn that the faithful, although they worship God purely, and behave themselves innocently, yet stand they not immoveable always at one stay, but are shaken with

many distresses, and cast down; and that the only difference between them and the faithless is this, that their fallings are not deadly. For we know that although God strike the reprobates but lightly, yet it becomes the cause of their utter destruction. Solomon proceeds yet further, saying, *that the righteous man falleth seven times a day, and riseth as oft again,* Prov. 24. 16; by which words he teaches that the godly are not seldom afflicted in this life, but tried with daily exercises, and yet never forsaken of the Lord. To be brief; it is to be noted also, that every light fall were enough to crush us all to pieces, if God should not put his hand under us.

25 *I have been young, &c.*] The meaning of these words is not at all doubtful; namely, that when David was come to be an old man, he had not seen any of the righteous or any of their offspring beg their bread. But out of the matter itself there springs a difficult and knotty question, because it is a certainty that many just men have been brought to beggary. And that which David speaks of his own experience, pertains to all ages. Besides that, he has taken this sentence out of Moses. For in Deut. xv. 4, begging is accounted among the curses of God, and the law in that place exempts the worshippers of God from it by express words. How can it stand, then, that none of the righteous was a beggar, seeing that Christ placeth Lazarus among the most abject of beggars? Luke xvi. 20: I answer, it behoves us to bear in mind what I have touched upon heretofore; namely, that in God's temporal blessings no determinate and uniform rule can be fixed. For there are manifold causes why God should not shew his favour to all the godly alike in this world. For he chastiseth some while he spareth others; he healeth the secret diseases of some, and leaveth others alone, because they have not need of like remedy; he trieth the patience of some, according as he hath furnished them with the spirit of fortitude, and others he setteth forth for example sake. But in general he humbleth them all with the tokens of his wrath, that by such spurs they may be stirred up unto repentance. Finally, he provoketh them, by sundry afflictions, to fix their thoughts on the heavenly life; and yet it is not in vain, or to no purpose, that the law declares that God vouchsafeth earthly blessings to his servants, that they may be records of his favour towards them. I confess, I say, that it is not in vain nor for nought that the faithful are promised plenty to suffice them, as in respect of food and raiment, so that there be added an exception; namely, so far forth as God shall know it to expedient; for thus will it

happen, that the blessing of God shall shine forth in the life of men in general, and yet some of the faithful shall be pinched still with poverty, because it is for their good. And if it happen that any of the faithful be brought to beggary, we must lift up our minds aloft to that blessed heritage, where God will largely supply whatsoever is wanting now in his transitory benefits. Also we must bear in mind this other thing, that if he involve the faithful generally in the same punishments wherewith he takes vengeance on the ungodly, when he sees them affected with the same diseases, in so doing there is nothing against reason. For although they launch not out so far as to the contempt of God, nor are utterly given over to wickedness, nor are satisfied with themselves, or wedded indissolubly to their vices, yet are they not clear from all guiltiness; wherefore it is no marvel though they are subject now and then to temporal punishments. Meanwhile we may be sure of this, that God so provideth for those that are his, that, being contented with their lot, they want nothing, because, by living sparely, they have always enough; according as Paul says, Philip. iv. 12, *I have learned to abound, and I have learned to endure penury.*

26 *He is daily merciful, &c.*] He repeats what he had spoken once before; namely, that God's grace is the well-spring of all good things, that can never be drained; and therefore, while it exerts itself towards the faithful, they not only have enough to serve their own turns, but also wherewith to be liberal to others. What he adds concerning *the seed of them*, is expounded divers ways. That he speaks of the children of the godly, there is no doubt at all; and that is gathered from the last verse. But when he says they shall be *to a blessing*, some take it as though he had said they shall be the ministers of God's liberality; and so, according to them, the sense would be, that they should be followers of their fathers, in helping the poor, and in using liberality towards all men. But I am afraid lest this be too refined. Also I admit not what others teach; namely, that God's grace shall be so signal towards the children of the godly, that their names should be employed in a form of prayer for success and prosperity. I confess that this manner of speaking is so taken in divers places; but here, in my judgment, David means but to commend the continual holding on of God's favour from the fathers to their children; as if he should say, that God's blessing decayeth not when any righteous man dies, but remaineth even to his children. And assuredly there is no more certain heritage for our

children to succeed us in, than when God, embracing them and us with his fatherly lovingkindness, maketh them partakers with us of his blessing.

27 Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for ever.

28 For the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his meek ones; they shall be kept safe for ever: and the seed of the ungodly shall be rooted out.

29 The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell upon it for ever.

27 *Depart from evil, &c.*] David concludes in this verse, that if we will enjoy the true happiness whereof he makes mention, we must abstain from all wrongdoing; we must perform the duties of humanity, and exert ourselves in acts of beneficence. Now although this meaning be in nowise agreeable to the understanding of the flesh, yet is it a certainty, that all mankind are for no other cause wrapped in so many distresses and troubles, than because every man, for his own part, being given to fraud, extortion, and evildealing, refuses the blessing of God. Men themselves, therefore, are the hindrance, that they cannot live happily in this world, and every man happily and quietly possess that which is his own. Not without cause then does David glide from his former doctrine into this exhortation; because if the meek possess the earth, then, according as each man wishes well to himself, so also must he apply himself to honesty and beneficence. And it is to be noted that it is not without good reason that he joins these two together; namely, that the faithful should endeavour to benefit others, and also bridle themselves from all evildoing; for, as has been seen in Ps. xxxiv., it happens oftentimes that some man not only behaves himself courteously towards some kind of men, but also deals out of his own with a bountiful hand, and yet, in the meanwhile, spoils and plunders from some other source the means of displaying his liberality. Therefore, whosoever is desirous to have his good offices approved before God, let him endeavour to do good in suchwise to his brothers that have need of his help, that he harm not one to help another, nor make one sorrowful to make another glad. And in these two words has David briefly comprehended the second table of the law: first, that the faithful should keep their hands clean from all misdealing, and give no man cause of complaint; and secondly, that they should not live to themselves, and be given to their own indivi-

dual profit, but should be desirous to benefit all others in general, as far as their ability will go. We said heretofore, that this blessing which is promised to the righteous, *that they should inhabit the land*, is not seen in an uniform degree: and we alleged the cause; namely, that God is scarce able to find any example of such great uprightness among men, but that even the most perfect procure miseries to themselves by their own fault, and therefore no marvel though God withdraw his blessing, at least in some part. And again; we know how the carnal affections run riot, unless the Lord put a bridle upon them. Besides this, no man is forward enough in hastening to mind the heavenly life, if he be not stimulated with various incitements. Hence it comes to pass, that the possession of the land, which David allots to the children of God, is not always planting the feet in it, because many disquietudes mar their peace, and yet it is no unreal thing that he promises. For although common experience shew not manifestly, as yet, that God's children are heirs of the land, yet do we feel, according to the measure of our faith, how available the blessing of God is, which floweth continually, like a spring that cannot be drained. Truly they are more than blind who see not that this reward is given already to the righteous; namely, that God upholdeth and maintaineth them with his defence.

28 *For the Lord loveth, &c.*] This confirmation of the former sentence is to be noted, because it is drawn from a sublimer principle; that is to wit, that God is pleased with righteousness and true dealing, which seems indeed to be incomplete; but as David takes it for granted, what ought to be settled in the hearts of all the faithful, that the world is ruled by God's providence, he reasons very well. First, therefore, we must observe, that God hath a care for the state of mankind; and that it is not driven about by chance, but directed by his counsel, so that he guideth the issue of all things by his appointment, and governeth them with his hand: and secondly must be added, what David speaks of here; namely, that righteousness pleaseth God. Hence it follows, that whosoever lives uprightly and harmlessly among men, he shall be happy, forasmuch as all things must needs go well with him in the end, because he is in the favour of God. Nevertheless, we must bear in mind, that the promise whereof we treat depends upon this, that God hath undertaken the safe-keeping of the godly; not to foster them continually in the shade and in idleness, but to succour them in the end, after he hath exercised them with the cross. For there is a weighty matter conveyed by implication in these words; namely, *that God will not forsake his*

own meek ones: therefore, they misinterpret this Psalm who sever the favour of God, wherewith he embraceth his faithful ones in this life, from hope and patience. Yea rather, lest any man should be over hasty and precipitate in judgment, the prophet keeps the minds of the godly in suspense, until God shew his judgment after the death of the wicked, in punishing their posterity. For this implies as much as if he should assert again, that although God's judgment appear not forthwith, yet are the ungodly and wicked in never the better case, because their just punishment remains to be executed on their children. But if the curse of God put not forth its force immediately against them, it is no marvel if he keep secret the favour that he beareth towards the faithful.

29 *The righteous shall inherit.*] The repetition of this doctrine is not superfluous, for it is very hard to be engraven on our minds. For although all men covet happiness, yet, notwithstanding, scarcely the hundredth person looks for it at God's hand; but rather, in order to make provision for themselves, they in a manner deliberately strive which shall provoke the vengeance of God most; while some of them stain themselves with craftiness and forswearing, some run headlong to robbery, some practise all kind of cruelty, and others assail even with the sword and poison. How the continual dwelling ought to be understood, I have told you even now, and several times before; namely, that whereas they are in the midst of harassing inquietudes, yet doth God protect them under his wings; and whereas nothing is stable beneath the moon, yet he keepeth them safe, as it were in a secure haven. And then hereto is added inward peace, better than a hundred lives, and which is therefore regarded as a privilege surpassing all others.

30 The mouth of the righteous will speak of wisdom, and his tongue will talk of judgment.

31 The law of God is in his heart; and his feet shall not slide.

32 The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him.

33 The Lord will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he shall be judged.

30 *The mouth of the, &c.*] Because it is customary with hypocrites coolly to assume for their own advantage whatsoever the Spirit of God speaketh of the just and upright,

David defines what manner of righteousness God requireth at the hands of his children, and divides it into three heads; that their talk should be without guile, that the law of God should reign in their heart, and that they should order their conversation aright. Some expound the first member otherwise; namely, that the righteous are guides and schoolmasters to others to live well; and therefore, to *talk of wisdom* and to *speak of judgment* imports as much with them as to instruct others in godly doctrine, and to frame them to the fear of God; which, although I disallow not, yet I fear lest it be too restricted. For wisdom and uprightness are opposed as much to heathenish and unclean talk, whereby the wicked endeavour to blot out the name of God, as to cunning and fraud, and every species of underhand dealing, as well to menaces and terrors. The meaning therefore is, that the righteous honourably and reverently extol the righteousness of God, that they may nurture themselves and others in all godliness; and secondly, that as well in their own business as in other men's, they allow that which is right without dissimulation, and put no colour by sophistry upon evil things, nor finally step aside at any time from the truth. Hereto is added soundness of heart; which, though it go before in order, yet is it not amiss to set it in the second place, because the scripture observes not order so curiously in enumerating virtues or vices. Moreover, this soundness of heart comes from this; if the law of God be settled in the heart, which alone both prescribes the best rules to live by, and bridles all unhallowed affections and lusts, and also frames men to the following of righteousness: for it cannot be that a man should give himself steadfastly to upright dealing, or employ himself to the benefit of his brethren, regarding himself as secondary, or renounce covetousness, subdue pride, and maintain war against his own nature, except he be endued with the fear of God. Now follows the third member, which is referred to the outward behaviour. Others think it a promise; but I have no doubt that David continues the definition of righteousness even hitherto. The meaning therefore is, that although many occasions of sinning tempt the children of God, and that also the most part of men, as much as in them lies, withdraw them by their wickedness from the fear of God, because God's law possesses and rules their hearts, they waver not, but stand with sure footing to their resolution, or at least adhere to the right course.

32 *The wicked watcheth, &c.*] He expresses more plainly the manner of possessing the land; namely, that God defendeth his children when they are beset round about with

enemies. Whence we gather again, that heretofore they had no quiet state promised them, and one free from all trouble. For these things could not stand together; that the faithful should be able to take their ease and pleasure in their quiet heritage, and yet be daily delivered as sheep out of the mouths of wolves. Meanwhile, these two verses contain a rare comfort; namely, that even in the midst of sundry annoyances, they shall, notwithstanding, escape safe by the help of God. David, therefore, warns the faithful beforehand, that when they shall see their enemies sit watching for them, and seek all the means that can be to annoy them, they, on the contrary part, must consider what care God taketh for their safety, and what watch and ward he keepeth to preserve them harmless. Indeed David confesses that the treacheries wherewith the ungodly assail, not only the goods, but also the lives of good men, are terrible in themselves, because they cruelly conspire their destruction. Nevertheless, he bids us to stand to our resolution with unappalled courage, because God hath promised to be our defender himself. And this circumstance of the deliverance is to be considered; namely, that he driveth it off so long, that we be even at death's door. Also in the next member we are admonished, that however heedful good men may be to guard against all illwill; however sedulously they endeavour to deserve well at all men's hands, to shun all offence and wranglings, yet shall they be subject to false accusations. For David says not that their virtues shall be blazed abroad with due praises with the joyful consent of the whole world; but when they shall be haled to judgment, and in a manner overwhelmed with slanders, so that they are like condemned persons, he bids them be contented with the defence of God, who will at length clear their innocence from the unrighteous judgments of men. If any man object, that many of the children of God have been put to a cruel and premature death after they were condemned, I answer that their avenger sitteth nevertheless in heaven; for although Christ was haled to a barbarous death with surpassing ignominy, yet was he taken up from that distress of condemnation, as says Isaiah, liii. 8; and God dealeth in the same manner daily with his members. If a man make exception again, that David preaches not here of the life to come, but of the present state of the godly, I must repeat again the solution that I gave before; that is, that God's earthly benefits are restrained to his own purpose, and so, according as he knoweth it to be expedient, they are one while suppressed either in whole or in part, and another displayed to the view of all, but never flow after an uniform rate. Then

may it happen that the holy martyrs, after they are condemned, may also be put to death, as though they were forsaken of God; because nothing is better or more desirable even to the martyrs themselves, than to set forth God's glory by their death. And yet not even he that giveth the rein to the ungodly to exercise their cruelty, ceaseth to be the assertor of the righteousness of his servants, because he sheweth openly before his angels, and before his whole church, that he approveth it, and that he will sit in inquisition upon it. Yea rather, lifting them up out of the darkness in which they were plunged, he maketh their ashes to yield a most fragrant perfume. Finally, after the Lord hath suffered them to be overwhelmed with unworthy reproaches, he himself will give judgment whereby he may vindicate their righteous cause from wicked calumnies.

34 Tarry thou the Lord's leisure, and keep his way, and he will exalt thee, that thou mayest inherit the land: when the wicked men shall be cut up, thou shalt see it.

35 I have seen the wicked strong, and spreading out himself like a green bay.

36 And he passed away, and, lo, he was gone: and I sought his place, and he was not found.

34 *Tarry thou the Lord's, &c.*] David returns again to his exhortation, that the faithful, trusting to God's promises, and being sustained by him, should not suffer themselves to be drawn hither and thither by any temptations through crooked and entangled ways, but abide steadfast in the obedience of God. First, therefore, he exhorts them to hope and patience, as if he should bid them bend themselves wholly to God in the time of their trouble, and quiet themselves till he shew them his countenance again, which he had hid from them. Hence grows that other, that they should not step aside from the way of the Lord; for wheresoever hope and patience flourish, they will easily bridle men's minds, that they shall not break out into anything that is unlawful. And surely the reason why every man seeks his own advantage by evil arts, we shall find to be this, that no man leans upon God; or else, if fortune smile not upon him soon, he thinks it is to no purpose to keep himself uncorrupt. Moreover we may learn by this place, that if even many of the virtuous and single-hearted lead their life miserably in continual pains, they suffer that punishment justly, because scarcely the hundredth person

of them patiently tarries God's leisure, and holds on still his right course; so far are they from resolving assuredly, that it is his proper office not only to lift up his servants from the dunghill, but also to dig them even out of their graves. Neither has David used the word *exalt* without cause, that we may know that God ofttimes extends his hand to the faithful, even then especially when they seem overwhelmed with the weight of calamities. Afterwards David adds that the *wicked shall perish before the eyes of the godly;* for if the ends of them were not dissimilar, the state wherein the reprobates rejoice for a time, would easily allure even the best sort to sin. And surely God would pleasure us with such sights daily, if we had eyes to behold his judgments. And yet, though all the world be blinded, God ceaseth not to render just reward to men's wicked dealings, saving that by punishing them in more secret ways, he withdraweth from us this fruit, of which our own dulness depriveth us.

35 *I have seen the wicked, &c.*] By his own experience he confirms what I said even now; that though the wicked are intoxicated with their happy state, and all men have them in estimation for it, yet is it but transitory and fitful, and therefore nothing but a very phantom of the imagination. And in the first verse he says, it is no strange or unwonted thing, if the ungodly, being puffed up with his prosperous state, spread himself far and wide, yea and put the simple sort in fear also. Afterwards he adds, that their greatness, which was gazed at not without wondering, vanishes away in a moment. As for the words; עריץ may be translated as well *stout* or *strong*, as *dreadful*, because the word from which it is derived signifies sometimes *to fray*, and sometimes *to strengthen*. Some take the particle מתערה for *green*, but rather it imports *discovering* or *spreading out itself*, as high and broad trees spread out their boughs afar off. And I doubt not but David taunts the insolence of such as vaunt themselves immoderately. *To pass away*, in the second verse is put for *to vanish away;* and thus he admonishes us to sit still awhile, till by its passing away, it may appear to have been but a mist, whatsoever the world admires in the prosperity of the wicked.

37 Mark the perfect man, and consider the just; for the end of that man is peace.

38 But the transgressors shall be wiped out together: the end of the ungodly shall be cut off.

39 But the welfare of the righteous is of the Lord; he is their strength in the time of trouble.

40 And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them; he shall deliver them from the ungodly, he shall preserve them, because they trust in him.

37 *Mark the perfect man, &c.*] David exhorts the faithful to consider more heedfully whatsoever examples they meet with, as well of God's mercy as of his judgment. But he teaches at the same time, that it is ill giving judgment, from the first view that presents itself; because, unless men wait with quiet minds for the opportunity, which is laid up in the good pleasure of God, ofttimes faith is quenched, and all longing after God's promises perishes therewith. This is the reason why he requires careful observation, and bids us look to it; because when our senses are possessed by the temptation that is once offered to our eyes, haste causes us to miss of the truth. But if a man extend his view to a distance, as it were from a watchtower, he shall find it was truly said that the reprobates are discerned from the righteous, by the end. And this sentence seems to be added by way of correction, that we may learn to suspend our judgments, if God execute not out of hand whatsoever he hath taught heretofore; and if our desires boil out too fast, at once let this check encounter us, that the end is not yet come, and that we must give God time to restore confused things to order. Some take the word אחרית to be spoken of them that come after, but improperly; for David places the difference only in the end; because God, after he hath inured his servants to hardness, blesseth their adversity, and turneth the mirth of the ungodly into mourning.

39 *The welfare of the righteous, &c.*] The effect is, that whatsoever betides, yet shall the righteous be safe, because they are in the hand of God, and he can never forget them. Which is to be marked advisedly, that they who are in most adversity, may be upheld by this confidence, that the safety which they look for at God's hand is assured; because God is eternal, and governeth the world by his commandment; as Christ said in John, x. 29; *The father, which hath given you to me, is greater than all.* And David holds him still to this principle; that forasmuch as righteousness is approved of God, it cannot come to pass that he should forsake his true worshippers, and disappoint them of his help. Therefore he bids the faithful lean upon him, not only while things proceed according to their desire, but also when afflictions oppress them. By which words he teaches, that it is enough if God give his servants strength that they quail not when they are distressed with anguish, or that they sink not under the burden when groaning

under severe afflictions. To this purpose also makes it that David urges twice upon the word *deliver;* namely, that the children of God should acquaint themselves with suffering temptations; and that if God prolong them, they should from time to time call to remembrance that as soon as he had tried the patience of them sufficiently, he would be their deliverer in the end.

PSALM XXXVIII.

David being sick, as may be conjectured, of some sore and painful disease, because he acknowledges that he is chastened by the Lord, deprecates his wrath. And that he may the better move him to mercy, he bewails the grievousness of his malady with many circumstances; the which it will be more convenient to note one by one, as they come in order in their places.

[*A Song of David for a remembrance.*]

2 Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath; neither chasten me in thine anger.

3 For thine arrows are lighted upon me; thy hand is come down upon me.

4 There is no soundness in my flesh at the sight of thy wrath; nor rest in my bones at the sight of my sin.

5 For mine iniquities are gone over mine head, and as a heavy burden have they overladen me.

6 My wounds are putrefied and festered at the sight of my folly.

The title has reference to the contents. For the interpretation of those who think it is the beginning of a common ballad, as in other Psalms the beginning of the song from which the tune was to be taken, is wont to be added, is insipid and flat. Nay rather, lest the chastisement wherefrom David was delivered might slip forthwith out of mind; he made this remembrance as well for himself as for others. For he knew how easily the punishments which God layeth upon us, which ought to instruct us all our life after, vanish away; and secondly, he was mindful of his own calling. For inasmuch as he was set as a master and a teacher over the whole church, whatsoever he had learned in God's school privately, it behoved, to apply to the common use that it might do good to all men. And so we are warned that it is

a profitable kind of exercise, to bethink us frequently of the punishments wherewith God hath afflicted us for our sins.

2 *Lord, rebuke me not, &c.*] Because the sixth Psalm also begins with this verse, where I have expounded it; lest I burden the readers uselessly, I will now be more brief. David desires not simply to have his sin remitted, but only that God should slake the rigour of his wrath. Whereupon we gather that David did not give a loose rein to the desires of his flesh, but prayed with a duly chastened fervour of piety. For naturally all men would wish to have liberty given them to sin without control. But David restrains himself, and enlarges not God's indulgence beyond its proper limits, but is content with the mitigation of his punishment; as if he should say, I submit myself to be chastised at thy pleasure; but see in the meanwhile that thou handle me not more severely than I may be able to bear, but temper thy judgment according to the measure of mine infirmity, that the heaviness of the affliction do not utterly overwhelm me. This prayer, as I have said, was framed according to the rule of godliness; for it contains nothing but what God promiseth to all his children. Moreover it is to be noted that David frets not inwardly to himself, but makes his moan unto God; and that not in the way of murmuring, but in the way of humble suit with unfeigned confession, and after that with hope of forgiveness. David has put *anger* and *wrath* for extreme rigour, and set them as contraries against fatherly chastisement.

3 *For thine arrows, &c.*] He shews that he was constrained by extreme necessity to crave assuagement of his pains, namely, because he sunk under the greatness of the burden. This is always to be observed for a rule in praying, that God's promises be present before our eyes. But God's promise is, that he will punish his servants, not according to their desert, but according as they are able to bear. This is the reason why the saints so often make mention of their own weakness, when they are pressed too sorely. And David does wisely in calling the sickness which he suffers by the name of *God's arrows*, and *hand* or *plague*. For unless he had been persuaded that it was laid upon him by God's appointment, he could never have found in his heart to seek remedy of his wound at his hand. We see how all men in a manner are blind in God's judgments, and dream that they are but casual occurrences; so that scarce one among a hundred has an eye to the hand of God. But David in his sickness, as in all other his adversities, sets before his eyes the hand of God armed to punish his sins. And surely, whosoever goes no further than the feel-

ing of his own grief, he differs nothing from brute beasts. But as all God's scourges put us in mind of his judgment, the true wisdom of the faithful is to have an eye to the hand of him that striketh, as the prophet says, Isaiah ix. 13. Therefore the pronoun *thy* or *thine* carries a force with it, as if he had said, he had not to deal with a mortal man, whose hand might shoot his arrows according to the measure of his power; but with God, who shooteth out his arrows with a far other force.

4 *There is no soundness, &c.*] Whereas others translate it, *there is no beauty*, it seems not to be so well adapted. And now follows another member, in which David yields the praise of righteousness unto God, without whom the former knowledge would profit little or nothing; yea rather, sometimes it exasperates men's minds, so that they provoke God's wrath more, while they charge him with cruelty, and pour forth horrible blasphemies against him. Wherefore, nothing can be more preposterous, than to vapour about God's bare and absolute power, as they term it, which robs him of his righteousness. Therefore David, as soon as he has conceived God's displeasure against him, turns to his own sins: for he had already set it down for a sure ground, that God is no tyrant, that would be cruel without cause, but an upright judge, that is never angry but upon offence given to him. Then, if we will yield due praise unto God, let us learn, by the example of David, to connect our sins with his wrath. In the next verse he complains, that he is overladen with so great a burden, so that he utterly faints; and yet he confirms the former doctrine again, that he deserves to feel God so sore and dreadful. For although the word עון is often taken for punishment, yet we know it is but in a metaphorical sense. And I deny not that David assigns to the effect what is proper to the cause, when he calls the punishments, which he had procured by his own fault, *iniquities*. Nevertheless, his meaning is, at the same time, to confess plainly, that all the adversity which he suffered was to be imputed to his sins. For he quarrels not with God for the excessive severity of his punishment, as Cain did, who said, *My punishment is greater than I can bear*. And truly, Moses uses this same word עון in the same place, Gen. iv. 13, so as there may be some similarity in the words of David and Cain. But David's purpose was far different: for when there crept into his mind such temptations as these; namely, How hardly doth God handle thee! Surely, seeing he hath no care to relieve thee, he will have thee destroyed and brought to nought. He not only despiseth thy sighs, but also the more he seeth thee cast

down, the more fiercely he pursueth thee. To preclude the approach of these ungodly surmises, he set this buckler against them, that he was afflicted by God's just judgment. For just now also he ascribed the whole grievousness of God's wrath to his own sins; and he will say again soon after, that whatsoever he suffers, was procured by his own foolishness. Therefore although, in bewailing his own miseries, he may seem after a sort to chide with God, yet he still retains the modest conviction (for God punisheth not out of measure) that there remains nothing for him but entreaty; whereas the ungodly, howsoever their own consciences accuse them, do notwithstanding murmur against God like untamed wild beasts, which with their teeth gnaw the chains wherewith they are tied.

6 *My wounds are putrefied.*] In this verse he mentions the long continuance of his disease, which ought to avail to obtain him relief. For when the Lord, Is. xl. 2, declares that the wickedness of his church was come to the full, and that he had rendered her double for her offences; he meaneth, that when he hath punished enough, he is soon pacified: or rather, that if he continue his vengeance any long time, he is, through his mercy, as it were weary, so that he maketh haste to deliver; according as he saith in another place, Is. xlviii. 10, *I have tried thee, but not as silver, lest I should consume thee.* Therefore David's complaining of the long continuance of his misery tends to this end, that when he had endured due punishment, at length he might obtain release. Surely, it was no small temptation to the servant of God, to pine away with continual languishing, and as it were to rot and be dissolved into corruption in his miseries, wherein his constancy is the more to be admired; for it broke not down from the long period of delay, any more than it sank under the immeasurable load of sufferings. Furthermore, his putting the word *foolishness*, for our *sin*, by no means appertains to the extenuation of his fault; as the hypocrites, when they are unable to escape the charge, still that they may rid themselves of half the guilt, cover it with a false pretence of ignorance, or try to shuffle out of it by alleging that they slipped through ignorance and inadvertence. But according to the phrase of the Hebrew, by the term *foolishness* he admits that he had played the fool in obeying the lust of the flesh in opposition to God. And doubtless the Spirit, by everywhere designating crimes, however atrocious, by the term *folly*, does not diminish the criminality of men, as though they were guilty of light offences only; but rather, charges them with maniacal fury in that, blinded by unhallowed desires, they fly in the face of their maker. And thus

sin is always conjoined with folly or frenzy. And in this sense speaks David of his own foolishness; as if he should say he was out of his wits, and haled away and driven about with beastly rage, like a brute beast, when he neglected God, and followed his own lusts.

7 I am bowed down; I am brought very low; I go black all the day long.

8 For my reins are full of burning; and there is no soundness in my flesh.

9 I am crushed and sore broken: I have roared for the very grief of my heart.

10 Lord, thou knowest all my desire; and my groaning is not hid from thee.

11 My heart panteth, my strength faileth me, and the very light of mine eyes is gone from me.

7 *I am bowed, &c.*] This description shews full well, that the holy man was oppressed with extreme grief, insomuch that it is a wonder that under so vast an accumulation of miseries there should remain any faith that could lift his mind upward. Furthermore, when he says, he was bowed down, he seems covertly to set his casting down against the stubbornness of many who will not be humbled by any scourges of God, but rather struggle against him with their hard-heartedness. For although they must needs be vexed with their griefs, yet they after a sort benumb themselves. David therefore moves his heavenly judge to pity, by this circumstance; that he was not one of the stubborn-hearted sort, who stand with stiffneck against the hand of God; but lay prostrate and heart-broken; as also the apostle Peter, 1 Ep. v. 6, exhorts all the godly to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. Wherefore, let us learn that there is not any other remedy to ease our miseries, than to lay aside all stubbornness, and bow down ourselves under God's rod. The word קודר, which I have translated *black*, others translate *clad in black*, and apply it to the outward apparel, the black colour of which has always been a token of mourning. But their opinion is more correct who understand it of the blackness of the skin: for we know how grief disfigures men with emaciation and loathsomeness. David therefore shews the greatness of his sorrow by the token of sorrow, that the native colour had faded in his face, and he was like a corpse now shrivelled up. In the next verse, some translate כסלים, the flanks. But the more allowed opinion is, that it denotes the place under

the reins, which extends to the hips, or the mid-space between the thighs and the flanks, in which place the sore is thought to have been. Also, the interpreters disagree in the word נקלה. I, in my translation, have followed those that keep the first original of the word; for קלה signifies to burn. Nevertheless, others not improperly take it for filthiness; howbeit I like not to have it restrained to the sore, because in my judgment the sense is simple, that his reins, his flanks, or his thighs, were corrupt with burning, or at least were covered with a sore disease. For that part is both most subject to burnings, and corrupt humours commonly flow down thither. Some expound it allegorically, that David seemed loathsome to himself when he weighed his reproach; but it is too forced. And when he adds that he was *weakened and sore broken*, it is a confirmation of the former sentence. For he wished to express, by divers manners of speaking, how intolerable the vehemence of his grief was: for as it is not very manly to burst out into crying and roaring, and yet we know that David was not one likely to shrink in bearing distresses, we gather that he was racked with horrible torments, inasmuch as, not content with tears, he was forced to cry out also. Now although the word נהמת, which I have translated *roaring*, is derived from another word than that which David has used in this place; yet is the meaning clear, that the uncontrolable emotions of his heart forced him to cry out.

10 *Lord, thou knowest, &c.*] He adds this not so much in respect of God as to arm himself with hope of obtaining, and so to animate himself to pray. And although the sense thereof may be twofold; either that David assures himself that the Lord heareth his prayers and groanings, or else that he testifies that he discharged his cares and troubles into the bosom of God; yet either sense amounts to the same. For as long as men doubt whether their groanings come unto God or no, a horrible dread drives them to and fro, and holds their minds fettered and imprisoned, so that they cannot rise up unto God. But a cheerfulness to pray rises hence; when we are persuaded that our groanings vanish not away in mid air, but are listened to familiarly by God. This, therefore, might be no mean comfort to David, to make him press unto God, not with a doubting and trembling heart, but taking to him beforehand this confidence which we spake of; that, according as he himself speaks in another place, his tears were laid up in God's bottle, Ps. lvi. 9. For, that the way may be open for us unto God, we must believe that he is the rewarder, as the apostle terms him, Heb. xi. 6. But I rather embrace the other sense,

that David recounts that he had disburdened his sorrows into the bosom of God. For the reason why the greater part of men profit not by groaning in their sorrows is, that they direct not their prayers and sighs unto God. David, therefore, that he may confidently promise himself that God will be his deliverer, says that he had always been witness and privy to his griefs; because he had neither chafed upon the bit within himself, nor wasted complaints and howlings upon the air, as the unbelievers are wont to do, but had laid bare all the emotions of his heart before God himself.

11 *My heart panteth, &c.*] The word that David uses, signifies to travel or wander; but here it is taken for the trouble of the heart that is engendered by thoughtfulness, when we are at our wits' end. For, thereafter, as men are vexed with unquietness, so toss they themselves on all sides, and so their heart runs round, or flits to and fro. But seeing that faith, after it has yielded us up to the obedience of God, holds our thoughts fixed on his word; here a question may be put, in the way of objection, how this unsettled flitting could touch David's heart? I answer, that although, being supported by God's promises, he kept his ground steadfastly, yet was he not utterly void of human infirmity. Neither truly can it otherwise happen, but that, as soon as we fall into any peril, our flesh will urge sundry devices upon us, and draw us into divers by-ways in search of counsel. In this case, the most staid would slip, unless he bridled himself with the same bit wherewith David was reined and held in: that is, by keeping all his thoughts enclosed within the boundaries of God's word. Nay, even in our quiet prayers, we find too well how unsettled our minds are, which it is hard to keep uninterruptedly attentive from beginning to end. Now, if this betide us when there is no earnest trial, what will befall us in sore storms and tempests, which menace a thousand deaths, and no way to escape them? Wherefore it is no marvel, though they carried away David's heart, so that it was subject to many tossings amid his tempestuous agitations. He adds, that he was deprived of strength, as if he should compare himself to a dead man. That which he adds concerning the light of his eyes, some expound thus: that there remained no counsel or forecast for him, so sore did despair beset him on all sides. Nevertheless, the simpler sense will be, that the light of life was taken away from him, because in it the energy of the soul principally shews itself.

12 My friends and my companions stood over against my sore; and my kinsfolk stood afar off.

13 And they also that sought my life laid snares for me: and they that sought occasion to mischief me, talked wickedness, and imagine deceit day by day.

14 But I, as a deaf man, heard them not; and am as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth.

15 And I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs.

12 *My friends, &c.*] He adds other circumstances to augment the grievousness of his misery, wherewith to provoke God to pity. One circumstance is, that he finds no help or comfort among men. For in saying that his *friends stand over against him*, he means that they cease from all offices of humanity. And that might happen either from pride or fear. If they withdrew themselves from a miserable creature for disdain of him, they were cruel and proud; and if they denied their helping hand for fear of odium, it was most unpardonable cowardice. But, meanwhile, it augmented David's calamity not a little, that not even his friends and kinsfolk durst shew any token of compassion towards him. Truly it is a most sore temptation, when a man has flourished in great store of friends, and afterwards is forsaken of all men. There follows another circumstance, that his enemies laid snares for him, talked about his destruction, and imagined deceits among themselves. The effect is this, that while his friends sit still like cowards, his enemies bestir themselves vigorously, and endeavour earnestly to destroy him. He says *they seek his soul*, because, being his deadly enemies and bloodthirsty men, they could not content themselves with doing him any common harm, but furiously sought his destruction. Notwithstanding, by the way, he complains not so much that they raged against him with force of arms, as he accuses their guileful conspiracies; which he denotes first by *snares*, and afterwards adds, in plain terms, that they commune about his destruction, and, as it were with privy whisperings, consult among themselves how to do him hurt. Now, as it is certain that David borrows not artificial rhetoric from the bar, wherewith to win himself God's favour; but rather takes his reasons from God's word; the sentences which he gathers together here, for the strengthening of his faith, must be applied to our use. If all the helps of the world fail us; that if some defraud us of the services due to us, and others breathe nothing but our destruction; let it come to our remembrance, that it is not in vain to lay forth these things, as we are praying, before God, whose property it is to succour those that are in mi-

sery, to take under his protection such as are perfidiously forsaken and betrayed, to bridle the wicked, and not only to withstand their violence, but also to frustrate their wily practices, and to disappoint their deceits.

14 *But I, as a deaf man, &c.*] He compares himself to a dumb and deaf man for two causes. For first, he intimates that he is so overwhelmed with false and perverse judgments, that he was not allowed to allege so much as one word in defence of his rightful cause. And secondly, he brings forth his own patience before God, to incline him the more to pity. For such meekness, not only of right conciliates favour to the innocent in adversity, but also is a sign of true godliness. For they that hang upon the world, and are actuated only by regard of men, if they cannot revenge their wrongs, will shew by their loud complaints with what a fever their mind is burning. Therefore, that a man may quietly and without agitation bear out the frowardness of his enemies, and their wrongful assaults, slanders, and deceits, he had need rest upon God. Howbeit, whosoever shall be fully assured in himself, that God is his defender, will cherish his hope in silence, and bridle his own affections, calling upon God for help. Therefore Paul, Rom. xii. 1, says aptly, that then we give place to wrath, when being oppressed before the world, we nevertheless rest still in God; as on the other hand, whosoever gives head to his own passions, takes vengeance, as much as he can, out of God's hand, and leaves no access for his help. True it is, that if David might have been heard, he was ready to defend his own innocence; but when he perceived he could not prevail, but rather saw himself shut out and debarred from all defence, he possessed his soul in patience, looking for the heavenly judge. Therefore he says he held his peace, as if he had been convicted, and had his mouth stopped. And truly, when we know our consciences clear, it is very hard to bear other men's wrongful condemnation patiently, and with shut mouth, as though we had nothing to say for ourselves, and had no defence left.

16 For on thee, O Lord, do I wait; thou wilt hear me, O Lord my God.

17 For I said, Lest peradventure they triumph over me, in the slipping of my foot they lifted up themselves against me.

18 Surely I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is ever before me.

19 Truly I bewray mine own iniquity; and I am sore dismayed at my sin.

20 But mine enemies are strengthened, and they that be mine adversaries without cause are become mighty.

21 And they that requite evil for good are against me, because I have followed goodness.

17 *For on thee, O Lord, &c.*] Here David points out the wellspring of patience; namely, that he has overcome all temptations of the world by trusting in the grace of God. And truly, a man's mind shall never be framed to gentleness, neither shall he bridle his affections, till he have learned to maintain his post supported by hope. At the same time also he adds, that he cherished his hope with continual thinking upon it, lest it should fail. And the only means to persevere is, when being furnished with God's promises, we appeal unto him. Yea rather, by setting before our eyes his faithfulness and constancy in keeping his promises, we are sureties for him to ourselves. Therefore not unfitly does Paul, Rom. v. 4, join patience to hope and comfort. And the repeating of the words shews, that the holy man was engaged in a sore and hard encounter. *Thou, my Lord, my God,* he says, *shalt hear me;* namely, because if God should have made long delay, there was danger, lest either he should faint for weariness, or fall into despair, unless he fought constantly and boldly, by setting this double defence before him.

17 *For I said, Lest peradventure, &c.*] By this circumstance also he confirms his faith and earnestness in praying, that if he should happen to be forsaken, his enemies would triumph. And this indignity is of no small weight with God, to move him to help us; because the wicked, by vaunting themselves frowardly, not only make war with our flesh, but also directly assault our faith, and endeavour to undermine whatsoever godliness is in us. For to what end serve their mockeries, but to persuade us, that whatsoever God hath promised, is but vain and of none effect? Moreover, he adds by and by, that he is not stricken with this fear without cause; for he had already had experience of their proud boastings. But we are taught by this place, to conceive so much the more hope of the approach of God's help, as our enemies increase in their cruel insolence, or have, in their proud disdain, trodden us under their feet already overladen with adversities.

18 *Surely, I am ready to halt, &c.*] This verse has made the interpreters think, that David was diseased with some ulcer, that put him in hazard of halting ever after. But

how unsupported a conjecture this is, I have shewn heretofore in Psalm xxxv. 15. Surely, there is no more reason why we should imagine David to have been lame, than Jeremiah, where he says, *that his enemies gaped* or *watched earnestly for his halting*, Jer. xx. 10. Therefore it is rather a metaphorical expression, whereby David means that if God succour him not betimes, there is no hope for him to recover his former state; and that he is so troubled, that he shall go maimed, or lame, all his life long. And in way of exposition it follows, *that sorrow ever keepeth him company.* For the sense is, that he is so sore pressed, that he cannot forget his grief so as to have a moment's respite. In both parts of the sentence, David confesses that his disease is incurable, except he obtain remedy at God's hand; and that he is not able to bear it out, unless he be raised and held up by the hand of God himself. Hence it comes to pass, that he gathers all his thoughts and affections unto God only; because that as soon as he shall turn aside from him, he sees nothing but present decay.

19 *Truly I bewray, &c.*] By a comparison he amplifies what he had said even now of the pride and reproaches of his enemies. For he says, that while he lies in neglect and sorrow, as if he were a wicked man, they leap about cheerful and merry; or rather, rear their crests, because they excel in power and strength. But first, it is worth while to mark in what sense he says he bewrays his sin. For, in my judgment, they are deceived who take this place simply, as if he protested himself guilty before God, in order to obtain pardon. Their meaning is, that he should repeat in a manner the same thing which we have seen in Psalm xxxii. 5, *I have made my sin known unto thee, and I have not hid mine iniquity.* But in this place he speaks not so much of his repentance, as he bewails his mournful and calamitous state; and therefore sin and iniquity are taken for the afflictions and punishments, which were the signs of God's wrath; as if he should say, God's hand was against him, and sore upon him, so that by the beholding of his misery, the world might commonly deem him to be a condemned and reprobate person. That the sense may be the clearer, these two verses must be read jointly; *I bewray mine own iniquity, but mine enemies live: I am dismayed at my sin, but they are strengthened.* And yet by the way, I deny not but that he deems the miseries which he endures proceeded from his sins. For herein do the godly differ from the wicked; that admonished of guiltiness by their misfortunes, they cite themselves humbly to God's judgment-seat. Therefore in estimating the cause by the signs or effects, he comprehends

two things; namely, that he lies prostrate under the huge heap of his miseries; and also that all these miseries are just chastisements. This *living*, which he attributes to his enemies, implies as much as to flourish in prosperity, and therefore he adds that they are strengthened and increased in power, for so do I interpret the word רבב in this place, because he would speak improperly to say they were multiplied. For he complains not that the number of them increases; but rather magnifies them, that by reason of their riches, they also gather more boldness to oppress the good and simple. He adds that he is assaulted by them without any desert of his, that he may find God the more favourable to him. And surely that God may defend us with his favour, we must evermore beware that we hurt no man, and that we give no man cause to hate us. Of which sentence there follows a fuller confirmation immediately after; namely, that they requited him with injuries for his good offices. Howbeit, David proceeds yet further in these words; namely, that he not only abstained from all mis-dealing, but also that he had done well to them; in consideration whereof their fury is the less excusable, which not only moves them to do harm without cause, but also cannot be mitigated by any courtesy. Truly, this unworthy dealing is agony to ingenuous minds, when evil and untoward persons make so ill a return. But when they bethink them of this comfort, that God is no less offended with this churlishness, than they that bear the wrong; there is no reason why they should be troubled out of measure. Therefore to assuage sorrow, let this doctrine always prevail; that as often as the wicked, to whom we have sought to do good, reward us with injuries, God will certainly be their judge. There is added the highest step of desperate malice; namely, that they hated the zeal for uprightness in David. For needs must they be over-froward persons, and of a depraved and crabbed disposition, who dislike uprightness so much, that they make war deliberately against the followers of it. Truly, it is a grievous temptation, that the more sincerely pious men bend themselves to the service of God, they should procure themselves so much the more troubles; but yet this comfort should abundantly suffice them, that not only a good conscience stays them up, but also that they know, that chiefly for the same cause, God's mercy is ready at hand for them, upon assurance of which trust they dare go forth into God's sight; and, because it is his cause as well as theirs, entreat him familiarly to take upon him the defence of it. Doubtless David has by the example of himself prescribed a rule to all the faithful, to purchase all the hatred of the world,

rather than to depart in the least from their duty; and not to refuse to have those as their enemies, whom they see to be against goodness and all righteousness.

22 Forsake me not, O Lord my God; neither depart thou far from me.

23 Make haste to help me, O Lord, my welfare.

In this clause he touches briefly the chief point of his desire, and the sum of his whole prayer; namely, that whereas he is forsaken of men, and piteously afflicted in every way, God would afford him refuge and raise him up. And he uses three modes of expression; that God would not forsake him or cast off the care of him; that he would not be far from him; but make haste to help him. Surely David was persuaded that God is always near his servants, and that he delayeth not one minute longer than he should do. But as we have seen in another place, no marvel at all if the saints, when they unburden their cares and sorrows into the bosom of God, make their wishes according to the feeling of the flesh. For neither is it a shame to confess one's own infirmity; neither is it expedient to cover the doubtings that creep upon us. In the meantime, although delay were a trouble to David according to the flesh; yet he shews evidently in one word that he prays not doubtingly, when he terms God his welfare, or the preserver of his welfare. For others translate it to *salvation*, but it is forced; for rather, against all the practices wherewith we have seen his faith assaulted, David sets up this bulwark, that he is nevertheless assured of safety in God.

PSALM XXXIX.

In the commencement, David shews with how great bitterness of grief he was driven to make complaints too fervid and violent. For he confesses that whereas he had framed himself to patience and silence, he was nevertheless compelled by the vehemence of his grief to break out into an excess which he by no means intended. Afterwards he utters expostulations mingled with prayers, which shew exceeding great trouble of mind; so that it appears he wrestled with no ordinary endeavour against despair.

[*To the chief chanter Jeduthun. A Song of David.*]

2 I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue; I will keep a bridle at my mouth while the ungodly standeth before me.

3 I was dumb, and spake nothing; I held my peace from good words, and my sorrow was the more stirred.

4 My heart glowed within me, and in my musing burned as fire; and I spake with my tongue.

It is well known that Jeduthun was one of the singers whom the holy histories commend. And therefore it seems to me likely that this Psalm was given to the chief chanter, who was of his household. For though some refer it to the tune, and think it to have been the beginning of some other song, it is a forced construction. Nor am I at all more disposed to admit the conjecture of others, that David here complains of some disease; because unless for urgent reasons, it is absurd to restrain general propositions to particulars; nay rather, one may conjecture from the sore torment which he describes, that either many afflictions are comprehended, or certainly some one sorer than all the rest, and which continued a long time. And it is to be considered that David in this Psalm proclaims not his own merit for conceiving his prayers unto God framed according to the rule of godliness; but rather confesses the defect of his own weakness, for boiling over with immoderate grief, and for being hurried into expostulation by the violence of his emotion.

2 *I said, I will take heed.*] By this circumstance David amplifies the grievousness of his sorrow, in that, contrary to the purpose of his mind, he brake forth into the most bitter complaints. For the effect is, that whereas he had settled his mind to patience, and enjoined himself silence; yet by the violence of his grief this resolution was put to flight, and expressions were wrung from him which shewed that he grieved too intemperately. By the expression *to say*, it is known that often is betokened, not the outward speech, but what each person has conceived in his mind; and therefore occasionally is added *in heart*. David therefore means, not that he made a shew of fortitude in the eyes of men; but that he was well fortified to endure adversities by long meditation before God. And this diligence is to be noted; for it was not for nought that he was so intently cautious, but because he was conscious of his own frailty, and also knew what manifold snares Satan is wont to lay for men; he looked about him here and there, and stood upon his guard on all sides, lest temptation, stealing thievishly upon him, either on the right hand or on the left, might penetrate into his mind. The approaches then had been shut up on all sides, if his constancy had not been broken through and routed by the

surpassing bitterness of grief. And whereas he says, *he shut his mouth with a bridle, lest he might sin in speaking*, it must not be understood as though he had much ado to hold in and swallow his grief; for they do but counterfeit, who make a shew of meekness in countenance and speech, when they swell with stubbornness within: but because nothing is more slippery than the tongue, David testifies that he endeavoured with such earnestness to bridle his affections, that not so much as one word might slip out of his mouth whereby he might bewray any impatience. And truly he must needs be endued with rare fortitude, whosoever unfeignedly and deliberate with sincerity restrains his tongue, which is so prone to slip. The portion that follows, that is to say, *while the ungodly standeth before me*, is taken almost by all men, as though David had cloaked his grief, lest he should give the wicked occasion to blasphemy, who, as soon as they see the children of God shrink, insolently vaunt themselves, not without mocking of God himself. But he seems to express a something more by the word *stand;* namely, that forasmuch as he saw the ungodly bear sway, he determined to pass over this indignity with silence; which otherwise not a little grieves and torments good men. Therefore he says, not simply that his seeing the wicked withheld him from yielding himself to be a laughingstock to them; but when the worst men flourished, and being above others in degree, despised them, he was fully determined in his mind not to be troubled at it. Doubtless he shews manifestly, that he was so beset with wicked men that he could not utter a sigh freely, but it would be laughed at and made a by-word. Now then, seeing it was so hard a matter for David to hold his tongue, lest he should sin by murmuring, we may learn by his example to strive earnestly to moderate our affections as often as troubles molest us, lest any impious expression of dissatisfaction against God slip from us.

3 *I was dumb, &c.*] Now he shews that it was no fleeting purpose whereof he spake, but that he avouched, by the deed itself, how thoroughly it was settled in his heart. Therefore he says he held his peace for a time like a dumb man, which was a singular token of patience. And thus he determined to hold his peace, not that his will should want effect as light persons are wont to do, but he inured himself to patience a long while and steadfastly; and that, not only by keeping silence, but by making himself utterly dumb, as though he had been tongueless. The portion of the sentence *from good* is expounded by some as though he not only held himself from ungodly or unadvised words, but

also abstained from speaking at all. Others think he refrained from speaking good because, being overwhelmed with miseries, he found no comfort anywhere, or because he could not sing the praises of God for grief. But in my judgment, the natural sense is, that although he was able to defend himself adequately, or wanted not honest grounds of expostulation, yet he held his peace of his own mere will. Therefore, although he might have set up a righteous defence of his innocence against the wicked, yet he had rather be wanting to his cause than indulge in any intemperate grief. Afterwards he adds, that when he had restrained himself awhile, at length the violence of grief brake through the barriers which he had set to his tongue. Now if David, being so stout a champion, fainted in the midst of his race, how much more have we need to be afraid of falling in like manner? He says that *his sorrow was stirred* because his heat was more kindled, as we shall see by and by. Some translate it *corrupted*, as if he had become worse, like a wound that rankles with putrefying or festering; but this is forced.

4 *My heart glowed, &c.*] Now he enhances the greatness of his grief by a similitude; namely, that his sorrow being inwardly suppressed, grew hotter, until the heat thereof prevailed more and more. And hereby we may gather a profitable lesson; namely, that the more a man frames himself to obey God, and employs all his endeavours to patience, so much the more vigorously is he assailed, because Satan, who is not so troublesome to the slow-hearted, employs all his force to bear against him. Therefore, if at any time there burn any violent heats in us, we must call to mind this encounter of David's, that our hearts fail us not, or at least that our own infirmity drive us not headlong to despair. The dry and hot exhalations which the sun raises up in the summer, if nothing obstructed them in the air, would mount aloft without any commotion; but when clouds opposing them hinder their free passage, they generate thunders by the very conflict. The same also befalls the godly, who are minded to mount upwards; for would they resign their mind to wandering imaginations, they might as it were range where they listed; but now, when they endeavour to devote themselves to God, there rises up resistance by impediments of the flesh. And therefore as often as the flesh shall put forth her assaults, and kindle fire in our hearts, let us understand that we are exercised with the same kind of temptation which put David to exceeding great trouble. In the end of the verse he confesses himself to be so overcome with the grievousness of

the mischief, that he cast out foolish and unadvised words. For in his own person he sets before our eyes a mirror of man's infirmity, that being warned by experience, we may learn to get us fearfully under the shadow of God's wings. And whereas he says, *he spake with his tongue*, it is not a pleonasm, but a more full confession of his offence; namely, that he brake forth into outcries.

5 Lord, let me know mine end, and the number of my days, that I may be certified how long I have to live.

6 Behold, thou hast made my days as a hand-breadth, and mine age as it were nothing before thee: truly all men are but altogether vanity, even when they stand best.

7 Truly man walketh in a shadow; truly he disquieteth himself in vain: they heap together, and know not who shall gather.

5 *Lord, let me know, &c.*] Hereby it appears that he was hurried on improperly and by sinful excess, because he expostulates with God; as will appear more plainly by the sequel, for awhile after he will intermingle holy and duly-framed prayers. But here he takes it hard, that he is not dealt with more mildly, seeing he is but a frail transitory man; of which manner of complaints, Job's discourses are in a manner full. Not without anger and resentment therefore, he says; O God, seeing that thou dealest so severely with me, make me at least to know how much time thou hast appointed me to live. And yet my life is but a moment, what means then so great rigour? and why dost thou accumulate so great a heap of miseries upon my head, as though I had yet many ages to live? What good is it to me to have been born, that I should pass so brief a period of existence in misery, oppressed with a continued succession of calamities? Therefore, the next verse, *Behold, thou hast made my days as it were a hand-breadth,* must be read jointly with it. A hand-breadth is the measure of four fingers, which is taken here for a very small measure; as if he should say, Man's life flies away swiftly, and the end of it in a manner touches the beginning. Whence he concludes that all men are mere vanity before God. As touching the words, David requires not to have the shortness of his life shewn him, as though he knew it not to be short: but it is a kind of irony; as if he should say, Let us count

the number of years which I have yet to live, and see whether they be worth the miseries that I endure. Some translate the word חדל *worldly*, and others *temporal*. The latter translation cannot apply, because he does not as yet openly express the shortness of his life, but speaks still doubtfully. If the word *worldly* is adopted, the sense will be, Shew me whether thou wilt prolong my life to the end of the world. But in my judgment, what I have followed is the more correct, and there may be a transposition in the letters ד and ל. Howbeit, it may properly be taken for an age or space of life, when he says his age is as it were nothing before God: to move him the more to pity, he cites him for a witness of his frailty, meaning that it is not unknown to him how transient man's life is. *Whole* or *altogether vanity* imports as much as if he had said, there is nothing but mere vanity in all mankind: and this he declares of men when they stand firm; that is to say, even in their greatest vigour, when they desire to be accounted somewhat. And although grief extorted these complaints from David, yet it is to be noted, that men then feel how much they are less than nought, when they are pressed with adversity. For prosperity inebriates them, so that forgetting their estate, and sunk in insensibility, they dream of an immortal state on earth. Now although it be very profitable to know our own frailty, yet must we beware, that through an improper disgust at it, we are not moved to anger. Rightly and wisely does David avouch that even when man seems to be at his best, he is altogether nothing but a bubble blown up by vanity. Herein only is he in fault, that he takes occasion therefrom to wrangle with God. Then let our miserable estate so displease us that prostrate and suppliant we lift up our eyes to God; which David also, correcting himself, does awhile after. For he lingers not in that indigested lamentation, but through the feeling of faith climbs over to heavenly consolation.

7 *Truly man walketh, &c.*] He proceeds with the same sentiment: for under the name of *shadow* he means that there is nothing substantial in man, and that he is nothing but a shadowy apparition. Some translate it darkness, so that the sense would be, that man's life vanishes away before it can be known. But David simply predicates of men individually what Paul, 1 Cor. vii. 31, extends to the whole world; namely, that the fashion thereof passes away. And so he denies that there is any abiding state in them, because the shew of strength which appears for a short time soon flees away. As for what he adds, that they disquiet themselves to no purpose, it is a consummation of vanity: as if

he had said, Men seem to be born to the end they should be doubly contemptible; for they differ little from phantoms, and yet weary themselves with foolish or rather insane cares to no purpose. And he expresses more plainly how they dote in that they busy themselves anxiously in heaping up riches, and never remember that they must change their abode, at what moment they know not. For what is the cause that they so wear the flesh off their bones, but that they imagine that all is too little for them? For they gorge all the treasures of the world with their insatiable greediness, as if they should live a hundred ages. Moreover, David does not deride the covetousness of men in the same sense that Solomon does, Eccles. v. 8; because he not only speaks of their heirs, but also says generally that they busy themselves, when, notwithstanding, they know not who shall reap the fruit of it. They might indeed make provision for themselves; but what madness is it to curse themselves with the torment of bootless cares which have no certain object or limit? For he condemns eager and inconsiderate cares wherewith worldly men, being carried away, confound heaven and earth, while they reflect not that they are mortal, so far are they from acknowledging that their life is straitened to a handbreadth. Now although David uttered this from a distempered and troubled affection of mind, yet of itself it contains a profitable lesson; namely, that there is no remedy better for superfluous cares, than to call to mind that the race of our life is as it were but a handbreadth.

8 And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is unto thee.

9 Deliver me from all my sins; make me not a reproach of the foolish.

10 I was dumb; I will not open my mouth, because thou hast done it.

8 *And now, Lord, &c.*] After David has confessed himself to have been too much discomposed with fervid affection of mind, now he returns to sound and quiet reflection. Whereby that appears the better which I told you of erewhile; namely, that this Psalm is composed of prayers properly conceived, and of inconsiderate complaints. And I said that here David makes a beginning of praying aright. Even heathenish men feel now and then what he has confessed, but yet the knowledge of their own vanity brings

them not so far as to seek substantial support in God. Nay rather, they wilfully stupify themselves, that they may sleep soundly in their own vanity. Howbeit, we may learn by this place, that no man looks earnestly unto God, to depend upon him, or to fix his hope in him, until he is made to feel his own frailty, yea and brought even to nought. For there is great force implied in the adverb *now*: as if he had said, he had but now been awaked out of the flatteries wherein men's minds are besotted. But we must needs go beyond this elementary instruction; for it is not enough to seek tremblingly what we ought to do, except God meet us, that our waiting may lean itself upon him. Forasmuch, then, as it is not profitable for worldly men to be so convinced of their being nothing, as that they should nevertheless stay upon the same, let us learn to endeavour a further progress, that God may quicken us when we are without life, according as it is his peculiar office to create all things out of nothing. For man does then cease to be vanity, and begins to be somewhat indeed, when, being helped up by the hand of God, he aspires to things above.

9 *Deliver me from, &c.*] He proceeds in the course of his godly and holy praying. For he is not now carried away with the violence of grief to wrangle with God any more; but humbly acknowledging himself guilty before God, he resorts to his mercy. For when he requests to be delivered from his sins, in ascribing the praise of righteousness unto God, he charges himself with the blame of the misery which he endures; and he accuses not himself of some one fault only, but confesses himself fast bound in manifold guiltiness. And this must we hold for a rule, if we seek release from our miseries; for miseries shall never cease to flow out of miseries till the very fountain be drained dry. Unquestionably David requested assuagement of his miseries; but as he hoped, that as soon as he were reconciled to God, it would also come to pass that the punishment of his faults would have an end, he desires only that his sins may be forgiven him. And we are taught by the example of David, not only to desire release from the miseries which are troublesome to us, but to begin at the original cause, and to desire God that he will not lay our sins to our charge, but blot out our guilt. That which follows concerning *the reproach of the fool*, may be expounded as well actively as passively; that is to say, that God should not make him a laughingstock to fools, or that God should not involve him in the reproach to which the ungodly are given over. And because either of the two senses will agree well enough,

let the choice be free to the readers. Besides this, the word נבל signifies not only a fool, but also a despised person that is nothing worth, or base. True it is that all they are to be accounted reprobates, whom the scripture condemns by the name of foolishness; because, being deprived of right understanding, they are driven like madmen to the despising of God.

10 *I was dumb, &c.*] Here David finds fault with himself for not keeping that silence which we have seen him break heretofore through vehemence of grief. Therefore, when he says he was dumb, it is not a commendation of his uniform and continual modesty, but a correcting of his fault, as though, in chastising his own impatience, he had spoken to himself in this wise: What dost thou? for thou hadst enjoined thyself silence, but now thou dost murmur and clamour against God; and what shalt thou avail by this thy boldness? This place contains a very profitable doctrine; for nothing is more adapted to bridle the paroxysms of grief, than to call to mind that we have to do not with a mortal man, but with God, who will always maintain his own righteousness against all the querulous whisperings of men, yea and against all their senseless outcries. For whence is it, that the greater part of men rush into so great impatience, but because they consider not with themselves that they hold controversy with God? So then, while some impute their miseries to fortune, and some to men, and others invent various other causes, but scarce the hundredth person acknowledges it to be the hand of God, they give themselves leave to repine as they list. But contrariwise, David, that he may repress all unhallowed and sinful excesses, turns himself to God; and because what he suffers proceedeth from him, he determines not to open his mouth. And seeing that David, being afflicted with extreme miseries, binds himself to silence, because he acknowledges God to be the author of them; it behoves us to know that it is one of the chief exercises of faith, to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and to yield to his judgments in silence. Furthermore, it is to be noted, that men do then calmly and with settled minds submit themselves to God, when they are persuaded that he not only doeth whatsoever he listeth by his absolute power, but also is a righteous judge; for although the wicked perceive themselves to be stricken by his hand, yet, as they charge him with cruelty and tyranny, they cease not to belch out horrible blasphemies against him. By the way, David so reverently beholds and honours the secret judgments of God, that, being contented with his will alone, he thinks it impious to make words against him.

11 Take thy plague away from me: for, I faint at the stroke of thy hand.

12 When thou with rebukes dost chastise man for his iniquity, thou as a moth makest his excellency to consume; truly all men are but vanity. Selah.

11 *Take thy plague, &c.*] David confirms his prayer, that having obtained forgiveness, he might be handled gently. And yet this prayer breaks not that silence whereof he made mention just now; for our prayers, if they be framed according to God's appointment, are by no means noisy, so as they should provoke God's displeasure; but flow out of the stillness of faith and patience. True it is, when any man speaks with warmth to God, he must needs intermingle his own affections, pour out complaints, and discharge his excessive heat. But we see that David, who erewhile clamorously bewailed his own miseries, now with quiet mind considers what he has deserved, and prays for pardon. The effect is, that God should mitigate the punishment he had laid upon him. The reason is added *because he fainteth at the stroke of his hand*, he alleges not any excuse to make his fault seem less, but desires that his weakness may be borne with. And as he says individually, that he is consumed because he feels God's hand against him, so also immediately he adds a general sentence, that if God should begin to deal with us according to extreme rigour, there would be no help but that all must perish through his wrath. And he shews plainly that he speaks not of any one man, or of the common herd only, for, if God chastise even the stoutest person, he will cause to melt away all that they esteemed precious in themselves. The sum is, that no mortal creature excels so much in power and glory, as that the wrath of God, if it burn at all fiercely upon him, will not bring him soon to nothing. But we must search the words somewhat more narrowly; for David does not simply declare how dreadful God's wrath is, but he sets forth his justice in executing all manner of punishments. God's judgments strike a fear now and then even into heathenish men; but yet their own blindness drives them into a rage, that they wrangle with him nevertheless. By *rebukes* he means sore punishments, which are signs of unmitigated rigour and of God's wrath. For we know that God oftentimes striketh the faithful in suchwise with his rods, as that in punishing he giveth them also a taste of his mercy and love, and not only tempereth the punishments themselves, but also maketh them agreeable with the seasoning of comfort. David, then, treats not here

of his fatherly chastisement, but of that punishment which God layeth upon the reprobate, when like an inexorable judge he executeth such judgment upon them as they have deserved. With this rigour he says that all men are melted or consumed in a moment. But at the first blush, the comparison of God to a moth may seem absurd, for what affinity hath God's immeasurable majesty with a little worm? I answer, that David has used this similitude most aptly, that we may know that although God thunder not openly from heaven, yet the reprobates are consumed by his secret curse, no less than the moth, with his unseen eating, consumes cloth or timber; and therewithal he has an eye to man's excellence, which he affirms to be marred as it were with corruption, when God is offended with it, like as the moth consumes even the most precious cloths with fretting them. After this manner is the scripture wont to borrow divers similitudes for very good reasons, and to apply them to sundry relations. When Hezekiah, Isaiah xxxviii. 13, likens God to a lion, he refers it to the feeling of his own mind, because that, being beside himself for fear, he had almost fainted. But in this place David admonishes us, that although the world perceive not God's dreadful vengeance, yet are the reprobate consumed by his secret gnawing. And now in very good season is this sentence repeated again, *that all men are vanity*, because we never descend into ourselves that the knowledge of our own vanity may bereave us of all self-trust, unless we are thrown down by the hand of God. For whence comes it to pass that all men are so foolishly satisfied with themselves, yea, and also applaud themselves, but because they are wilfully blind to their own infirmities, as long as God beareth with them! The only remedy then to purge pride, is when men, being alarmed with a sense of God's wrath, begin not only to be dissatisfied with themselves, but also to humble themselves to the earth.

13 Hear my prayer, O Lord, and hearken to my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a wayfarer before thee, and a sojourner, like as all my fathers were.

14 Withhold thee from me, that I may gather strength, before I go hence, and be not.

13 *Hear my prayer, &c.*] He gradually increases his vehemence in praying: for in the second place he sets *crying*, and in the third place *tears*. And yet this climax is not rhetorical, which pertains only to the garnishing and

beautifying of words. But according as David wept with an earnest and inward affection of heart, so prescribes he unto us all a method of praying. When he calls himself a *wayfarer and a sojourner*, by these terms he shews again how pitiful his case was; and he adds purposely *before God*, not only because men wander from God as long as they dwell in the world, but also in the same sense that he said, *my days are nothing with thee;* namely, because God knoweth well enough, without a remembrancer, that men have but a short journey to perform upon earth, or that they tarry but a small time in it, like guests or sojourners. The effect is, that God seeth from heaven how miserable our state is, except he relieve us with his mercy.

14 *Withhold thee from me, &c.*] Word for word it is, *Shut from me;* and therefore some expound it, *Let there be a bulwark set betwixt us, that thy hand come not at me.* Others supply it with this word, *eyes;* but that makes slight difference in the matter: for David requests a little respite till he may recover strength, that he may at least take breath before he die. Howbeit, this clause has respect to the disquietude of the flesh, because he seems in the way of expostulation to require a free space of time to die in, as men are wont, that are worn out with weariness of their grief. Rightly, indeed, he acknowledges that there is no hope of recovering his health till God cease from his displeasure: but yet he does amiss to desire only a truce to be given him to die. This wish might be represented in a venial light; as if he had said, Lord, forasmuch as if thou proceedest to deal so straitly with me, that I must needs perish wretchedly, at least give me some respite, that I may in peace commit my soul into thy hands. But we may easily gather by the words, that his mind was tainted with the bitterness of his grief, so that he could not make a prayer that was pure, and seasoned with the sweetness of faith; for he says, *before I go hence and be not:* which manner of speaking verges on despair. Not that David thought death to be annihilation, or that he cast away all hope of welfare, and resigned himself to destruction; but because his thoughts being engrossed with his grief, he did not lift up his mind so cheerfully as he ought. And this sentence is to be found more than once in the complaints of Job. It is certain therefore, that although David did the best he could to repress his carnal affections, yet he suffered some disturbance in this behalf, that he should exceed due measure in his sorrowing.

PSALM XL.

David being delivered out of some great danger, and peradventure not from any one, but from many, mightily sets forth the grace of God; and by occasion hereof he mounts up to the commendation of God's providence, which extendeth itself to all mankind. Then he protests, that he will give himself wholly to the service of God, and defines briefly how he is to be served. Afterwards he returns again to thanksgiving, and celebrates his praises with many encomiums. At length, when he has complained of his enemies, he closes the Psalm with a new prayer.

[*To the chief chanter. A Psalm of David.*]

2 In waiting have I waited for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.

3 And he drew me out of the sounding pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon the rock, and established my steps.

4 And he hath put a new song into my mouth, *even* of praise to our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall put their trust in the Lord.

2 *In waiting have I, &c.*] The opening of the Psalm is a thanksgiving, wherein David declares that he has been delivered, not only from danger, but also from present death. Some divine that it is spoken of sickness, but without reason: yea rather, one may conjecture that he comprehends here many dangers wherefrom he had been delivered. And surely, it is more than once that he was in peril even to the death; so that he may justly say that he had been swallowed up in a deadly gulf, and sunk in the *miry clay*. Nevertheless, it shews a constancy of faith, that he ceased not to trust in God, although the long continuance of the mischief might dissipate his patience. For he says not simply that he had waited; but by repeating the word, he signifies that he had been in anguish a long time. The more therefore his trial was prolonged, so much the more clearly appeared the proof of his faith, in that he bare out the delay with an even and quiet mind. The effect therefore is, that when God delayed his help, yet David's heart fainted not for weariness: and that after he had shewn a sufficient proof of his patience, at length he was heard. And in his example there is set forth a profitable doctrine

for us; that although God's help appear not forthwith, but rather he holdeth us in suspense, and in perplexity, yet must we not give over, because faith is not tried thoroughly except by long endurance. Also the end that he tells of, ought to give us fresh courage; because, although God succour us more slowly, than the hastiness of our longing requires, yet his quiescence or winking is totally different from thwarting us: for if invincible strength of faith sustain us, the fitting time of our deliverance will at length arrive.

3 *And he drew me, &c.*] Some translate it, *the pit of desolation*, because the verb שָׁאָה, whence comes the noun שָׁאוֹן, signifies as well to destroy, or to waste, as to yield a sound. But the fitter allusion of the two is to the deep whirlpools, where the water gushes forth with tumultuous force. For by a metaphor he shews that he was in as near peril of death as if he had been cast into a deep pit that roars with the violent rage of waters. To the same purpose pertains the similitude of the *miry clay*, whereby he means that he stuck fast in his miseries, out of which it was no easy matter to extricate him. Afterwards is added a sudden and incredible change, which admirably illustrates the might of grace, when he says that his feet were set upon a rock, whereas he was before wholly overwhelmed with water; and that his steps were established or set upright, which before not only staggered on slippery ground, but also were set fast in the mire. He concludes, by stating that God put a new song in his mouth; by which manner of speech he betokens the consummation of deliverance. For in whatsoever way God succour us, he requireth no recompence, but that we should be thankful and bear it in mind. Therefore, as he bestoweth benefits upon us, so often openeth he our mouths to praise his name. Seeing then, that God provoketh us to sing his praises by dealing liberally with us, David with good reason reflects, that as he was delivered so wonderfully, there was ministered matter unto him of a new song. And he puts *new* for singular and exquisite, even as the manner of deliverance was not common, but worthy of everlasting remembrance. For although there is no benefit of God so light, which it becomes us not to commend most highly, yet the more mightily he stretcheth out his hand to help us, the more reason is there that we should be kindled vehemently to this exercise of godliness, so that our songs may answer the greatness of the grace.

4 *Many shall see it, &c.*] He extends yet further the fruit of the help that he had felt; namely, that it shall be an instruction to all alike. And surely God's will is, that the

benefits which he bestows upon any one of the faithful, should be records of his goodness towards them all; that one, being assured by the example of another, should not doubt that the same grace will be shewn them all. And although at first sight there seems no agreement between *fearing* and *hoping*, yet has not David linked them together without cause. For no man can conceive hope of God's grace, but he that is first endued with the fear of him. For generally I take *fear* for the feeling of godliness, which the knowledge of God's mighty power, equity, and mercy, engenders in us. Truly, the justice that God executed against David's enemies, was sufficient to make all men afraid. But in my judgment, David means rather, that by the deliverance which he had obtained, many should be awakened to yield themselves to God's service, and to keep themselves reverently under his command, because they recognise him as the just judge of the world. Then, whosoever submits himself heartily to the will of God, must of necessity join hope with fear; especially when assurance of favour stands before his eyes, whereby God allureth all men to him. For I have told you that the reason why God is set forth to us as merciful and beneficent towards others is, that we should assure ourselves that he will be the same towards us. And this *seeing*, whereof David speaks, is not referred to the eyes only, but chiefly to mental perception. For although all indiscriminately saw what had happened, yet many of them could never find in their hearts to acknowledge that David's deliverance was the work of God. Seeing, then, that so many are blind in considering God's works, we know that those only are thought to have eyes to see them, to whom is given the understanding of the Spirit, so that they are not occupied in the issues of things, but discern the secret hand of God by faith.

5 Blessed is the man that hath made the Lord his trust; and hath not looked back to the proud, and to such as turn aside unto lies.

6 Many are the wonderful works that thou hast done, O Lord my God: and no man can count in order unto thee, thy thoughts upon us: I will declare them, and speak of them; howbeit, they pass beyond expressing.

5 *Blessed is the man, &c.*] He rehearses what sort of materials for hoping well, his deliverance will give to all the godly; that is, that setting light by all the enticements of

the world, they quietly commit themselves wholly to his protection; and also assure themselves not only that they are blessed who trust in God alone, but also that all hopes at variance with this shall be deceitful and cursed. For this belief is not born with us, but is conceived partly by God's word, and partly by his works. Howbeit, the beholding alone of God's works, as I said before, would in nowise kindle this light in us, unless God, illuminating us by his word, should shew us his benevolence. Now when he promised to become merciful to us; moreover, testifying his gracious goodness by assured proofs, he signeth with his hand what he hath uttered with his mouth. Therefore, not without cause does David declare that as he is drawn out of the abyss of death into life, the faithful are taught by the actual proof what naturally men are reluctant to believe; namely, that all are blessed who hold themselves contented with God alone. Moreover, because the fondness of our own vanity of mind draws us commonly downward, and we are tempted with many lewd examples, because we are all of us prone to embrace delusions, David adds immediately after that he is blessed who looks not back to the proud. Some translate רהבים, rich men, or great men of this world; but improperly in my judgment, because these two, *pride* and *turning aside to lies*, are put jointly. Therefore, to look back to great men, signifies not, as these men imagine, to apply themselves to their power and riches, as though their welfare depended thereupon; but it imports as much as to be carried away to adopt their conduct by their example. For as proud men are flying about everywhere, who, despising God, set all their felicity in their own ambition, in craft, extortion, and wiliness, soon a perverse desire to copy them creeps upon others. Especially when things turn out according to their wishes, delusive hope solicits us to try the same course. Wisely therefore, and most needfully, does David warn us to beware of examples that allure us on all sides to falling away; that he may hold our minds fixed in steadfast trust in God alone. Further, when he says that the proud *turn aside after lies*, by this means he defines briefly the foolish confidence of the flesh. For what else is the pride of those that set up their own forgeries in place of God, but a deceitful illusion? Surely, whosoever arrogates in the least to himself, being puffed up with the wind of fond conceit, flatters himself to his own destruction. To be brief; pride and vanity are opposed to the godly trust which stays only upon God. For neither is anything harder to the flesh, than to rest upon God alone; and the world is always fraught with proud persons, who by soothing themselves

with vain enticements, would soon weaken the minds of the godly, if this bridle were not put upon them to restrain all erroneous and wandering opinions.

6 *Many are the wonderful, &c.*] Although the interpreters differ somewhat in respect of the words, yet is it well enough agreed that David in this place, with admiration considers the providence of God, by which he governeth mankind. And first of all he cries out, *that the wonders of God's works are great*, or *many;* meaning that God so governeth men's affairs with his inscrutable wisdom, that his works, which grow out of estimation by familiarity, far surpass the capacity of man. And so we see him climb from one particular to the whole class; as if he should say that God had not only by this one deed proved what fatherly care he beareth towards mankind, but also that his wonderful providence shineth forth in the several parts of the world. Afterwards he adds that God's *thoughts* or *purposes*, in regarding us, are higher and more hidden than that they may be distinctly reckoned in order. Some expound the portion אלינו, upon us, in way of comparison; as if it had been said that God's purposes are higher than our understanding. But David commends rather the care that God vouchsafeth to take for us. However, as by this means the text is broken off, they are compelled to take the word ערוך otherwise than I have translated it; namely, that no man can be matched or compared with God. But, that I may abstain from a long confutation, the intelligent reader will grant me that the native sense is this; that God by his incomprehensible wisdom ruleth the world in suchwise that it lies not in our power to put his works into their proper and due order, because our understandings fail us through their own dulness, before they can mount to so great a height. There is added, *unto God*; because although we consider in part how wonderfully God provideth for us, yet is this consideration restrained to our small capacity; and therefore it stops far short of the immeasurable glory of God. For as for those that expound it that God's purposes are not referred to God, because the greater part of men imagine that chance and fortune rule everything, as though David found fault with the unthankfulness of men that defraud God of his praise, doubtless they are deceived. For soon after, in adding that howsoever he go about to rehearse the works of God, he fails ere he can declare the half of them, he shews full well that the godly and holy meditation wherein the children of God occupy themselves, goes not beyond a slight taste. Now we understand David's meaning; for having spoken before of the deliverance sent him

from God, he takes occasion thereupon to set forth the general providence of God in cherishing and maintaining men. And it is his purpose to exhort the faithful to consider God's providence, that they should not hesitate to cast all their care upon it. For whereas some either chafe through unquietness, or quake at every little blast, and others are sedulous to fortify themselves with earthly defences; all this springs from the ignorance of this doctrine, that God governeth men's affairs according to his discretion. And as the major part, measuring God's providence by their own understanding, malignantly obscure or degrade it; David, judiciously placing it on its proper footing, takes away this obstacle, wherefore the sentence tends to this purpose; that in God's works men should behold that with reverence, which they comprehend not with their understanding; and as often as the flesh moves them to wrangling, they should lift themselves above the world. God seemeth to be asleep if he cease working; verily because, tying his hand to outward means, we consider not that he worketh by secret means. Wherefore we may learn by this place, that although the reason of his works be hid from us, yet is he always wonderful in his counsels. And this verse connects itself with the last. For no man rightly makes God his whole and substantial trust, but he that with closed eyes resigns himself to be ruled by him at his discretion. Neither does he unadvisedly, having spoken hitherto in the third person, now suddenly turn his discourse to God, that he may instruct us the more effectually in this soberness and modesty. Howbeit, when he denies plainly that God's works can be known, he does not therefore to deter us from the knowledge or examination of them, but he bridles our rashness, which else would range too widely in this matter. And to this end is the portion *to the* expressly employed; whereby we are admonished, that though a man be earnestly bent to muse upon God's works, yet he attains but to the extremities or borders of them. Therefore, though so great a height be far above our reach; yet must we endeavour, as much as in us lies, to approach more and more to it by continual advances, according also as we see that God stretcheth out his hand to us, to disclose unto us these wonderful things, which we are not able to conceive of ourselves, so far as is expedient for us. For nothing is more preposterous than to covet a gross ignorance of God's providence, because as yet we comprehend it not perfectly, but only have a prelibation of it; as at this day we see some bend their whole force to annihilate it, for no other pretence than because it surpasses our understanding; as though it

were reasonable to permit no more to God than the understanding of the flesh tells us is convenient. Far otherwise did David; who feeling his eyesight dimmed with their inconceivable brightness, confesses them to be such wonders that he could not comprehend the reason of them; and yet in the meanwhile he abstains not from all mention of them, but applies himself to godly consideration of them, according to the measure of his capacity. Whence we gather how foolish and trifling a caution it is, that because God's purposes are high, therefore we must utterly forbear speaking of them. But David, though sinking under the burden, ceased neverthemore to mount up, nor therefore kept silence because he was unable to utter them; but was content to wrap up his faith and utterance in admiration.

7 Sacrifice and oblation thou hast not loved; thou hast bored mine ears: burnt-offering and sin-offering thou hast not required.

8 Then said I, Lo, I come: in the roll of the book it is written of me.

9 That I should do thy goodwill, O my God; I was willing, and thy law is in the midst of my heart.

7 *Sacrifice and oblation, &c.*] Here David offers not only the sacrifice of praise, or the calves of his lips, as the prophet Hosea terms them; but to witness his thankfulness to Godward, he offers and consecrates himself entirely unto him; as if he had said, he is now thoroughly given up unto God, because, being delivered by his incredible power, he is twice a debtor to him for his life. Nevertheless by the way, treating of his true worship, he shews that it consists not in outward ceremonies, but is rather spiritual. Therefore his meaning is, that he comes not into God's sight with the outward pomp and figures of the law only; but brings with him the entire devotion of the heart. For we know that inasmuch as all men's minds are possessed with religion, so that no man dares withdraw himself openly and wholly from his obedience, yet a large portion of them step aside by crooked evasions. Whence it comes to pass that commonly they do but sport with religion, worshipping God superficially. Upon this occasion David shews which is the reasonable service of God, that he may discern himself from hypocrites, which approach God only with their mouth, or at least will pacify him with cold ceremonies. Now come I to the words. There is no doubt but David, by the four sorts

which he reckons up, denotes all the sacrifices of the law. Wherefore the effect is, that God requireth not ceremonies of his worshippers, but is content with pure affection of the heart, and with faith, and holiness of conversation; neither delighteth in the visible sanctuary, the altar, the burning of incense, the sin-offerings, lights, glittering of apparel, and outward washings. Whence he gathers that he must hold another principle and rule in worshipping God; namely, to yield himself wholly to him. *Thou hast bored mine ears.* Some think that David alludes to the commandment of the law, which is read Exod. xxi. 6. For if any bondman, when the time of his enfranchising came, did set light by his liberty, and being brought forth openly, said so before the people; then his master bored through his ear with an awl, that it might be a mark of continual thraldom. But I think this interpretation is constrained, and too refined. Others, more simply, teach that it imports as much as to make them fit to obedience; for he names not one ear only, but both. And we know that men are by nature deaf, because their ears are stopped by dulness, until God bore them through. Therefore, by this term is denoted the teachableness to which we are framed by the grace of the Holy Ghost. Nevertheless, I apply this manner of speech more closely to the circumstance of this place; namely, that David was not thick and slow of hearing, as the common sort of men are, so that he should understand nothing in the sacrifices, but after an earthly manner; but that his ears were cleansed, so that he might be a better interpreter of the law, and refer all the outward ceremonies to the spiritual service of God. For he encloses the boring of his ears as it were in a parenthesis, treating professedly of the sacrifices, so that the sentence may be aptly resolved in this wise; Lord, thou hast opened mine ears, that I may attain to a right knowledge of whatsoever thou hast commanded concerning sacrifices; namely, that they of themselves delight thee not at all. For thou, who art a Spirit, carest not for these earthly elements, nor hast any need of flesh or blood; and therefore, there is required some more high and excellent thing. Now if any man object that sacrifices were nevertheless offered by the commandment of God, I said just now that David in this place puts a difference between the spiritual and the shadowy worshipping of God. And it is no marvel, though in this comparison he say that the sacrifices are of no value because they were only helps to godliness, and tended to another end. Seeing then that God did but train his people to faith and repentance by such principles, we gather that he was unwilling to be worshipped

with sacrifices. For this is always to be remembered, that whatsoever pleases not God for its own sake, but for some other thing only, the same is rejected, if it be accounted for his very worship or service.

8 *Then said I, Lo, &c.*] By the adverb *then* he denotes that he was not a meet scholar before such time as God had opened his ears; but as soon as he had been taught by the secret instinct of the Spirit, he says his heart was forward and cheerful to obey. And here the true obedience is excellently distinguished from a slavish and constrained subjection. Then let us know, that whatsoever men offer to God is idle and offensive, unless they offer themselves; and moreover, that this offering of a man's self also is nothing worth unless it be willingly done. For these words are to be noted; *Lo, I come*, and also, *I was willing to do thy good will.* For חפצתי imports as much as, I was well pleased, or I willingly consented. Therefore, here is marked as well his readiness to obey, as also his freehearted affection and constancy of proceeding; as if he had said, he frankly preferred the desire to serve God before all other cares and desires; and not only was obedient with a good will, but also embraced the rule of godly life with a steady purpose of mind to continue in it; which he confirms yet better in the third member, by asserting that the law of God is fixed in his heart. For herein it follows, that how gaily soever men's works glitter, yet, if they spring not out of the lively root of the heart, they are mere phantoms; and secondly, that it is in vain to frame the feet, hands, and eyes, to the keeping of the law, unless the obedience begin at the heart. Howbeit, it is known by other places of the scripture, that it is the proper office of the Holy Ghost to engrave the law of God in our hearts. Truly God worketh not in us as in stones, that he should draw us without the feeling or inward moving of our heart. But as by nature there is bred in us a will, and the same will is corrupted by the default of nature, so that it always inclines to sinning, he alters it for the better, that we may freely desire righteousness, to which we were before averse with our whole heart. And hence comes true freedom, when God frameth our hearts to the obedience of him, which before were in thraldom to sin. *In the roll of the book.* Because the Greek translator had instead of *roll* put *head*, certain persons, running into philosophic refinements, have made themselves ridiculous by their silly inventions. But the original of the word במגלת is the same as *volumen*, for which the barbarous Latinists would have used *rotulum;* that is to say, a roll, or a scroll. But it is to be seen in what sense David claims that peculiarly for himself,

which is common indifferently to all men. For seeing that the law prescribes to all men the rule of living well, what is spoken here seems not to agree with any one man, or a few men. I answer; although the literal doctrine of the law belong to all men in common, yet, forasmuch as it is of itself dead, and does nothing but beat the air, God teacheth his servants another way. And because this inward and effectual teaching of the Spirit is their proper treasure, in the secret book of God it is not written but of them, that they should fulfil the will of God. Indeed God's voice soundeth through the whole world, so that they are made inexcusable as many as obey not: but it pierces into the hearts of the godly only, to whose salvation it is ordained. Therefore, as a general takes the name of his soldiers, that the number of them may be certain; and as a schoolmaster registers the name of his scholars in a scroll; even so hath God his children written in the book of life, that he may hold them under the yoke of discipline. There remains yet one scruple; because the Apostle, Heb. x. 5, seems to wrest this place violently, while he restrains that to Christ alone, which is spoken of all the elect, and contends expressly that the sacrifices of the law are abrogated, which David denies to be acceptable to God otherwise than by way of comparison; and citing rather the words of the Greek translator, than the words of the prophet, gathers more than David's purpose was to teach. Concerning the person of Christ, the solution is easy; for David spake not of himself only, but shewed in general what is meet for all the children of God. And therefore, when the body of the whole church comes forth, it must needs ascend unto the head itself. Neither is it any obstacle that, soon after, the miseries which he endures he imputes to his own fault; for it is no new thing at all, to have our sins improperly transferred to Christ. Concerning the abrogation of the ritual of the law, I answer thus; that the same is not unaptly gathered from the words of the prophet. For this place is not like many others, where God refuseth and condemneth the sacrifices, which were deservedly an offence to him for their uncleanness, because they were offered by hypocrites; for there, by reason of the abuse and corruption of them, God condemns the outward shew, which was nothing but a vain mockery. But here, when the prophet treats of himself, who was a pure worshipper of God, and yet denies God to be delighted with sacrifices, it is easy to gather thereby, that he had an eye to another end, and that they were but childish rudiments, which God had enjoined for a season to the people of old time. And forasmuch as the truth and substance of

them is contained in Christ, it is certain that they were abolished by his coming. The use of them flourished indeed still in David's time, nevertheless he admonishes us that the perfect worshipping of God stands complete without sacrifices; and that the ceremonies are as it were something adventitious and unessential, as they term it. And the same is worthy to be observed, that we may know that God, though he have taken away the figures, which he had commanded for a time, is, notwithstanding, not unlike himself, because in these exercises he had regard to the persons only. And whereas the apostle, following the Greek translator, applied to his purpose the word body, which is not in David, in this allusion there is nothing against reason. For he takes not purposely upon him to expound David's meaning; but because he had said before, that all other sacrifices were abolished by the sacrifice of Christ, he adds, at the same time, that Christ had a body fitted to him, by the offering up whereof he might fulfil the will of God.

10 I have declared thy righteousness in the great congregation: behold, I will not refrain my lips: Lord, thou knowest.

11 I have not hidden thy righteousness in the midst of my heart; I have blazed abroad thy righteousness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy goodness and thy truth in the great congregation.

12 Withdraw not thou thy mercies from me, O Lord: let thy goodness and thy truth always preserve me.

10 *I have declared, &c.*] Here again David sets forth his own thankfulness for no other purpose but to provoke God to continue the course of his bounteousness. For inasmuch as God alluretb us to give thanks as often as he sheweth himself liberal towards us, this also is one reason why he should proceed like himself, when he sees us thankful and mindful of it. Now although, in the first place, he put the name of *righteousness* simply, yet there must be understood the righteousness of God, which is expressed soon after. And he avouches, not only that he gave praise to God with secret affection, or privately; but also that he had openly published it in the solemn assembly, according as the faithful in those days were wont to testify their thankfulness by peace-offerings, if any notable deliverance had happened

to them. For the great congregation of which he speaks, is not referred to the concourse of people at courts of law, or about worldly matters, but to the constituted church, which we know was wont to assemble in those days at the sanctuary. And therefore he says that he had not hid God's righteousness in his heart, which it becomes men to blaze abroad openly to the edifying of one another. And surely whosoever suppresses it within him, would be willing that, as much as in him lies, God's name should be quite buried. And of this matter he appeals to God as a witness; not only that he may distinguish himself from hypocrites, who often roar out God's praises with distended cheeks, but without any affection, but also that he may make it the more certainly known, that he endeavoured earnestly and heartily to utter God's praises, and had a special care not to defraud him of any part. And this avouchment warns us, that what is treated of is of no small importance. For although God have no need of our commendations, yet will he have this exercise to flourish mutually among us, for many considerations.

11 *I have not hid thy righteousness, &c.*] Here is to be noted the accumulation of terms which are employed to denote one thing: for to God's righteousness is added his truth, his salvation, and his mercy. To what purpose, but to blazon God's benefits with as many encomiums as possible? Notwithstanding, we must mark how they differ among themselves, because thereby one may gather how rightly and aptly they agree with the deliverance which is now treated of. If any man like to bring these four into their due order, *mercy* will have the first place, by which alone God is induced to vouchsafe to regard us. *Righteousness* is the continual protection wherewith he defendeth his servants, and the gentleness wherewith he cherisheth them, according as has been said elsewhere already. Thirdly, lest any one might doubt of the continual flowing thereof with even and uninterrupted course, there is added *truth;* by which term we are taught, that God continueth like himself, and is not wearied with helping, nor at any time withdraweth his hand. Although concurrently there is a tacit pointing out of his promises, for no man will rightly take hold of God's righteousness but he that embraces it in his word when it is offered him. *Salvation* is the effect of righteousness, because God pursueth his servants with his free favour, helping them continually, till he make them thoroughly safe.

12 *Withdraw not thy mercies, &c.*] We see more clearly what I touched on even now; namely, that David speaks of his own thankfulness that he might keep God favourable to

him, and that he opened his mouth to sing God praises, that he might from time to time purchase new graces, against which the base ingratitude of our silence commonly forecloses the gate. Wherefore the relation is to be marked diligently where David says he did not shut his lips; that God, on the other side, should not bar or lock up his mercies from him. Whereby we are taught that God's goodness should evermore be ready for us, or rather flow out unto us like a wellspring that cannot be drained, if our unthankfulness did not cut off the course of it. The *mercies*, or רחמיך, of which he speaks, differ little from *goodness*; and yet it was not for nought that David chose this variety. But he did it first, because he could not otherwise satisfy himself in extolling God's grace; and secondly, because it was requisite that the wellspring of mercy or goodness should be shewn: to wit, when our miseries move him to help or succour us. Afterwards he commits the custody of his welfare to the goodness and tuition of God, because, as I said a little before, we must of necessity begin at the free favour of God, that his bounteousness may extend even to us. But as we perceive not that God is favourable to us before he give us assurance of his love, with good reason are his constancy and truth in keeping his promises joined with it.

13 For innumerable troubles are come upon me on all sides; my sins have taken such hold upon me, that I am not able to look up: they are more in number than the hairs of my head; my heart hath failed me.

14 Let it please thee, O Lord, to deliver me: Lord, make haste to help me.

15 Let them be ashamed and put to confusion together that seek my life to destroy it: let them be driven back, and put to shame, that seek to do me harm.

16 Let them be destroyed in reward of their shame, which have said unto me, *Aha, aha!*

13 *For innumerable, &c.*] The Hebrew phrase contains more than can be expressed in Latin: for it says עלי, *upon me*; meaning thereby, that he is not only beset on all sides round about, but also that an accumulation of mischiefs pressed upon his head. In the mean time he complains not that he is punished either unworthily, or above the measure of his fault, but rather he confesses plainly that his sins are

justly rewarded. For although עָוֹן, as we have seen more than once elsewhere, signifies punishment also, yet is the etymology of the word to be considered. Therefore, when David terms the pains which he endures, the fruits or effects of sin, there is implied a modest confession. Whereupon we gather with what great meekness and reverence he submitted himself to God's judgments; since, being overburdened with a huge heap of miseries, he extends his own sins far and wide over against them, lest he might blame God for too much rigour. Now when we see David so rigorously handled, we also may learn to sue humbly to our judge, even when we groan under extreme miseries. Moreover he shewed not himself to have been blockish or stony when his own heart forsook him or failed him; for it is just as if he should say, he lay not only broken hearted but also without life. Notwithstanding, understand the *fainting* or *failing of the heart* to refer to the sense of the flesh. For his steadfastness in praying is a certain proof that faith was never quite quenched in him; but as he was at his wits' end, and utterly void of all strength, it is not without cause that he says his heart quailed.

14 *Let it please thee, O Lord, &c.*] The word that David uses signifies to purpose a thing of mere goodwill. Therefore he desires to be delivered through the free mercy of God. Concerning making haste we have spoken already elsewhere; for although at such time as God makes delay, we must wrestle against the sense of weariness, yet he of his fatherly tenderness granteth us this form of praying, that he should make haste according to our desire. Afterwards, according to his wont, citing his enemies to the judgment-seat of God, he seeks confidence to pray for relief, from the circumstance of their cruelty and their wicked hatred. For thus must we determine with ourselves, that the more wrongfully our enemies trouble us, and the more cruelly they outrage us, so much the forwarder will God be to help us. And it is no slight comfort that God's mercy striveth against their importunity, so that the more fiercely they pursue us for mischief, the more ready is he to bring help. Now with what feeling David conceived these imprecations hath been told divers times already, and it is necessary to call it to mind here, lest any man, giving a loose rein to his anger, should excuse it on pretence of his example. For always the unhallowed zeal of those shall be condemned, who follow the headiness of the flesh for their guide, instead of the zeal of the Spirit. Whereas he wishes *that they should perish upon the reward of their reproachfulness,* the meaning is this: As they thought of nothing but to oppress me with

shame, and trample upon me frowardly when I was confounded and undone, so let like confusion light upon their own heads. For in the second member he marks out that kind of confusion, relating their false triumphs wherein they had dishonoured the miserable and wretched man. Moreover, as we are taught hereby, that when our enemies shall have railed upon us unmercifully, then is their reward ready for them; namely, that God should hurl back or roll upon their heads whatsoever they had imagined against us, so the same lesson must be a bridle of moderation to us, that we may behave ourselves compassionately towards our neighbours.

17 Let them all be glad and rejoice in thee, that seek after thee; and let them that love thy salvation say, The Lord be always praised.

18 I truly am poor and needy; the Lord hath provided for me; my help, and my deliverer; thou, my God, make no tarryance.

17 *Let them all be glad.*] To obtain deliverance, he uses another argument, which he has used often elsewhere; not because it is needful to allege reasons to persuade God, but because it is profitable to confirm our faith with such supports. Since therefore God will be known to be merciful not of one or two, but generally of all men; as often as he delivereth any one of his, he performeth a common benefit, which the faithful must apply to themselves together, while they behold in the person of one man what manner of being God will be to them all, who is not unlike himself. Therefore he shews that he craves nothing individually for himself, which pertains not to the whole church. He prays God to cheer up all the saints, or to minister occasion for them all to rejoice at universally, that being assured of his help, they may betake themselves with alacrity to him. Whence we conclude, that God giveth a proof of his goodness towards us, in each individual case. Also whereas he says that they love the salvation of God, it is worth the marking; for hence we gather, that the only true proof of faith is, if we hope not or covet not to be preserved by any other means than by God alone. For they that imagine various ways of salvation for themselves in this world, neglect or reject the salvation which God commandeth to be craved at his hand alone. What he said before is to the same purport: *to seek God.* For that a man may depend wholly upon God, and desire to be saved and preserved by his grace, he must cast

away all vain hope, and employ all his thoughts to embrace his power. Here again are to be marked two circumstances put in contrast with each other. He had said just now that the wicked sought his life; and now he attributes the contrary affection to the faithful, that they seek God. He had recorded the scoffing of the wicked, *Aha, Aha*, and he brings in the godly speaking otherwise; that is to say, *Let the Lord be praised for ever.*

18 *I truly am poor, &c.*] In this clause he intermingles thanksgiving with his prayer, though it may be that he records some vow that he made in his distress. Moreover the beginning of the verse may be resolved in this wise; Although I was wretched and destitute, yet did God think upon me. For since according as each man is miserable and despised in the world, so do we surmise him to be disregarded of God; we must believe steadfastly that our miseries breed not any disgust in God, so that he should scorn to succour us. We may, however, rather read it thus: When I was miserable and helpless, the Lord looked upon my necessity; that by this circumstance he may enhance the grace of God. For if God should prevent us beforehand with his goodness, and not tarry till adversity pinch us, his favour towards us would not appear so manifest. This comparison therefore does not a little illustrate God's glory in delivering David, that he vouchsafed to reach his hand to a man that was despised and rejected of all men, and destitute of hope and help. Now if David must needs be driven to this state of destitution, no marvel if other inferior and common persons be oftentimes humbled after the same manner; that they may perceive and earnestly acknowledge themselves to have been delivered out of despair by the hand of God. The simple and native sense of the prayer is this; Lord, thou art my help and my deliverer, therefore make no long tarrying. For as it is a folly to come before God with a doubtful and wavering mind, he gathers heart from his own experience, according to his own wont, and persuades himself that he shall in nowise be disappointed of the help by which he had hitherto been preserved.

PSALM XLI.

When David, being sore afflicted by the hand of God, saw himself pressed with the wrongful judgments of many men, as though he had been already accursed and damned to endless destruction; he fences himself against this temptation with the comfort of hope. By the way he complains partly of the cruelty and partly of the treachery of his enemies. And although he acknowledge himself to be justly punished for his sins, yet he accuses them of maliciousness for rancorously troubling a man who had deserved well at their hands. Last of all he connects with it an expression of joy, because he was preserved by the grace of God.

[*To the chief chanter. A Song of David.*]

2 Blessed is he that judgeth wisely of the poor: the Lord shall deliver him in the evil day.

3 The Lord shall keep him, and quicken him: he shall be blessed upon earth: and thou shalt not deliver him up to the lust of his enemies.

4 The Lord shall strengthen him upon the bed of sorrow; thou hast turned all his bed in his sickness.

2 *Blessed is he, &c.*] The great crowd of interpreters think that here are commended the offices of charity, when miserable men are cared for and helped. But others form a better judgment of David's meaning; namely, that he commends the uprightness of those who judge wisely and cautiously of men in adversity. Neither can the participle משכיל be taken otherwise. But at the same time it is to be considered why David pronounces those blessed who judge wisely and with sound discretion concerning God's scourges, when he chastiseth his servants. We have told you that he had to contend with perverse judgments; for at what time affliction pressed him sorely, many thought he had been forlorn and past all hope of recovery. And no doubt it happened unto him as it happened to holy Job, whom his friends deemed to be the wickedest of all men, because they saw God treat him with extraordinary severity. And truly it is too common a vice, that the greater part of men adjudge miserable men to destruction. For as the common sort of people clap their hands at rich men, and at those upon whom the world smile, esteeming God's favour by transitory felicity; so also ride they reproachfully upon the miserable sort, and foolishly imagine them to be hated of God, because he beareth not

with them so gently as he doth with the reprobates. This wickedness of judging harshly and malignantly has prevailed in all ages. God crieth out everywhere, that he trieth the faithful with adversities for divers causes; sometimes to inure them to patience, sometimes to subdue the sinful affections of the flesh, sometimes to cleanse and scour away the superfluous lusts of the flesh, sometimes to humble them, sometimes to make them an example to others, and sometimes to quicken them up to the minding of the heavenly life. But we for the most part run ahead without making a difference; and whosoever they are that suffer under the cross, we plunge them down lower than the lowest abyss. To bridle this rashness, David says they are blessed who rage not so cruelly with perverse judgments, but advisedly put a difference between plague and plague, and consequently, by wisdom of the Spirit, mitigate that malicious rigour naturally bred in the flesh. Just now I propounded an example in the person of Job, whom his friends hesitated not to account a castaway and forlorn person, because they saw him worn out with extreme misery. If any upright and gentle judge should light upon such a sight, he would employ the discretion or wisdom which David now commends. And we, being warned by this testimony of the Holy Ghost, must learn to refrain our over-hasty judgment. We must be well advised what we judge of our afflicted brethren, that we may hope well of their salvation, lest, if we condemn them unmercifully before the time, this wrongful rigour of ours light upon our own heads. But especially is that to be noted which I touched upon before; that David, being wellnigh overwhelmed with malicious and cruel judgments, armed himself with this comfort, lest he might have sunk under the temptation. Then may we also learn, that if at any time Satan endeavour to enfeeble our faith with the contumelious judgments of men, we must call back our thoughts to this wisdom, that despair creep not upon us. And this is the natural use of this doctrine. *The Lord shall deliver him in the evil day.* Some join it to the former member; and it were a tolerable reading, but that this distinction is the better adapted, which is supported also by the accent. Doubtless from hence is elicited a fuller doctrine; namely, that the Lord will deliver the poor in the day of his adversity. Many think that David wishes well to upright and modest men; as if he should say, If it happen that they are at any time afflicted with misery, the Lord will render them the reward of their pitifulness again. Others suppose that their words are recorded whereby their wisdom and uprightness may be perceived. Notwithstanding, in my judgment, they are

both of them deceived when they read the sentence in the way of wishing. But whether David speak in his own person or in theirs, he briefly commends the indifference which we must observe towards those that are in adversity; namely, that although God shew himself displeased with them for a time, yet he will be favourable to them, or there may at length appear a happier issue, than that judgment may be formed by the present view. We see now how much more plenteous and more forcible it is, that salvation should be hoped for at the Lord's hand even in the day of adversity, for else should no man lift up his head out of sorrow. For the Holy Ghost not only exhorteth the faithful to be forward in shewing kindness as often as they see their brethren afflicted, but also pointeth out a remedy to sooth our sorrow as often as our faith is shaken with adversity.

3 *The Lord shall keep him, &c.*] He proceeds with the same sentiment, that the Lord will keep the miserable man whom cruel and unjust persons proudly represent as lost. And always you must bear in mind the contrast between the evil day and the grace of deliverance. In the same sense is added restoration to life and happiness upon earth. For David's meaning is, that although he was as good as dead, yet was not he nor all the godly quite past hope of life. It might indeed seem absurd, that he promised himself a happy life in the world, because it were ill with us if there remained not a better state for us elsewhere. But forasmuch as many had despaired of his recovery, he purposely expresses that he shall nevertheless continue still alive, and that not without manifest signs of God's favour. By which words he does not in the least exclude the hope of a better life. That which follows concerning the *bed of sorrow*, has led some to a conjecture, in my judgment, not adequately supported. For that which is spoken indefinitely of affliction, they restrain to sickness. But it is no new thing for them that are sorrowful in mind to fling themselves upon their bed, and to lie down, for sometimes heaviness dismays men's hearts more than sickness. It is certainly probable that David was at that time touched with some very sore misfortune, which might be a token that God was not a little displeased with him. In the second member of the verse there is some obscurity. For some take *turning of the bed*, as if God, to give his servants some ease or refreshing, should have arranged his tick, as men are wont to do for sick folk, that they may lie the softer. Others, more correctly in my opinion, say that David's bed, which was destined for his sickness, *was turned*, when health was restored to him. According to this meaning, although he lie now in sadness

whom the Lord schooleth under the cross, yet he shall in a little while receive relief at the hand of the same God, by which he may recover his strength.

5 I said, Lord have mercy upon me; heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.

6 Mine enemies spake evil of me; When shall he die, and his name perish?

7 And if he come to see me, he speaketh lies: his heart heapeth up iniquity to himself; and when he comes forth, he will tell it.

5 *I said, Lord, &c.*] He sheweth by this verse, that in his adversities he sought not flatteries, as the greater part of men sooth themselves, and covet to have their sorrows assuaged with vain comforts. And doubtless, whosoever is ruled by the Spirit of God, takes warning by his own punishments, and acknowledges his sins of his own accord, and accepts calmly the corrections of his brethren, or rather he prevents them with voluntary confession. Moreover, David distinguishes himself from the reprobates and desperate persons by this mark, that he humbly bewailed his own offence, and betook him unto God's mercy. He requests indeed to have his punishment mitigated, but he begins deeper; namely, at obtaining forgiveness and reconciliation with God. For, as we have said elsewhere, they invert the right order, who in seeking remedy of their outward miseries, neglect the cause of them; as if a man would cherish a fever, and desire only to quench his drought. Therefore, before he speaks a word of healing his soul, he says, *have mercy upon me*, whereunto must be joined that which follows soon after, *for I have sinned against thee.* For he confesses that God is justly displeased with him, and that he cannot recover his favour till his sins be done away. I take the particle כי in its proper and natural signification, and not adversatively, as some will have it. Therefore he desires to be pardoned because he has sinned. Hereupon comes recovery, which is interposed as it were in effect of mercy, because David trusts to be relieved of his misery as soon as he had obtained forgiveness.

6 *Mine enemies spake, &c.*] To speak, in this place, is put for to imprecate; and by this unworthy dealing he provokes God to mercy, as has been said elsewhere: who inclineth so much the more mercifully to succour such as are distressed, when he seeth them treated cruelly; and so by the example of himself he stirs and lifts us up to

trustfulness, because the more outrageous the cruelty of our enemies is, so much the more favour does it purchase us with God. Also the manner of the imprecation testifies how cruel the hatred was, which could not be appeased but by destruction, yea and by ignominious destruction. For they could have found in their hearts, that the very remembrance of him should have been blotted out with him. That which follows in the next verse belongs to false friends. For they that were his professed foes persecuted him openly, and that has he shewn in the former verse. Now frames he another complaint, that many come to him with feigned heart as though they were his friends, who nevertheless afterwards poured out their poison. This is a kind of enemies more to be feared, because they cloak and hide their malice, and wind themselves privily to work mischief. Therefore, after he has complained of open foes, he comes down to counterfeit friends, whom he declares to come for no other purpose but to speak him fair, and in the meanwhile to imagine deceit in their hearts, and consequently to heap up wickedness privily in themselves; and to utter their falseheartedness as soon as they come out of doors.

8 All they that hate me whisper together against me: upon me they imagine evil against me.

9 The wickedness of Belial cleaveth unto him: and he that lieth shall not add to rise again.

10 Yea, even the man of my peace in whom I trusted, and that ate of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

8 *All they that hate me, &c.*] Now he seems to comprehend both of them generally, as well those that essayed to oppress him openly and as enemies, as those that practised the same craftily and by deceit, under pretence of friendship. Therefore he says that all of them consulted together about his destruction; according as wicked men bandy their treacheries to and fro with many whisperings. And therefore he adds the word *imagine*, whereby he denotes their froward and flagitious consultations. Furthermore, by the next verse it appears that the reason why they so conspired his destruction, was that they counted him a castaway, and a person worthy a thousand deaths. And this proud vaunting arose out of that malicious forejudging whereof he made mention in the beginning of the Psalm. Therefore they say that the wickedness of Belial holds him pent in, and as it were fast bound. For so does the word יצוק properly

signify; but, in translating, I have followed that which is most received.

9 *Cleaveth unto him, &c.*] Whereas others translate it, *shall pour out upon him,* it seems too constrained. As to the word *Belial,* I have spoken already in Ps. xviii: as, however, the grammarians will have it to be compounded of בלי and יעל, which is as much as to say *not to climb,* I interpret the word *Belial,* in this place, to be inexpiable wickedness, or a wickedness from which there is no retreat; unless some perchance had rather refer it to the mischief itself, as though his enemies should say, he is hampered in an incurable mischief. But, whatsoever it is, they give determinate sentence that God is an utter enemy to David, and that he will never be entreated, because he punisheth him so sorely. For, in saying, *he shall not add to rise again,* they utterly cut off all hope of better fortune. And it was no light temptation to be thus thrust headlong into the lower regions of punishment by the condemnation of men, when he knew his conscience to be clear. But so it pleased God to try his servant: that, contenting himself with his own conscience, he should not yield to any taunts of men. And it was his will to teach us, by his example, that the reward of righteousness is to be sought elsewhere than on earth, because we see in what unequal balance the world oftentimes weighs virtues and vices.

10 *Yea even the man of my peace, &c.*] David sets down this as it were the close of his miseries, that he found the same falsehood in one of his chief friends, or in more than one of them. For the alteration of number, to speak of many as it were but of one, is very rife among the Hebrews. And so the meaning would be this: Not only the common sort of men, or from men with whom I had not any near alliance, but the very chief of my friends, yea and mine own familiar friends, and those of my household, whom I admitted to my table to eat and drink with me, vaunt themselves reproachfully against me. The Hebrews call the *men of peace* their kinsfolk and connections; but yet it was a bond of more sacred friendship to eat of David's bread, for it implies as much as if he should term him his tent-fellow. If any man had rather understand it of some certain traitor, I will not resist him. *To lift up the heel* is, in my opinion, taken metaphorically, for to rise up disdainfully against a man that is cast down. Others interpret it to lay wait for one; but the other sense is more suitable, namely, that when wicked men saw David stagger, or already fallen prostrate, they abused this occasion to assail him indirectly, and yet scornfully, which is an ordinary matter with wicked and

slavish natures. Christ, citing this place, John xiii. 18, applies it to the person of Judas. And certainly we may feel assured that, although David speak of himself in this Psalm, yet he speaks not as a common person, but as one that represents Christ, because he was the universal pattern of the whole church; and the same is worth marking, that each of us may frame himself to undergo the same lot. For as it was ordained that that should be substantially fulfilled in Christ which was begun in David, so must it of necessity come to pass in each of his members, that they must not only be harassed violently, and with open force, but also must have domestic traitors; according, as Paul says, that there hang over the church not only battles from abroad, but also fear from within.

11 And thou, Lord, have mercy upon me: lift me up and I will reward them.

12 By this I know that I have pleased thee, because mine enemy shall not triumph over me.

13 And I said, Thou shalt uphold me in my soundness, and establish me before thy face for ever.

14 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, world without end. So be it, even so be it.

11 *And thou, Lord, &c.*] Again he gathers boldness to pray, from the wrongful cruelty of his enemies. And there is a tacit contrast between God and men; as if he should say, Seeing there remains no aid or help in the world, but rather, either brutal barbarity, or else inward malicious rage everywhere, thou, O Lord, at least succour us with thy mercy. And this order must be observed by all afflicted persons whom the world persecutes unjustly, that they occupy not themselves only in bewailing their wrongs, but also commit their cause unto God; and the more Satan goes about to trouble their minds, and to draw them hither and thither, the more attentively they gather themselves in unto God alone. And once again he puts God's mercy as the cause of his restoration. But that which follows concerning vengeance is harsh. For if he confessed truly and from his heart just now, that he is punished worthily, why does he not forgive others as he desires to be forgiven himself? Surely it were a shameful abuse of God's grace not to follow his example in shewing mercy. Besides this, it had been no point of humility or of mildness to breathe out vengeance while yet in the midst of death. But here are two things to

be considered; first, that David was not as one of the common sort, but a king endued with power from God; and secondly, that his denouncing to his enemies the punishment which they had deserved, is not by impulse of the flesh, but according to the character of his office. Then if any man in general, when he revenges himself of his enemies, should pretend David's example, first he must mark the difference of the person, and secondly he must see that the same zeal reign in him, or rather that he be ruled with the same spirit that David was. Inasmuch as David was a king, he might of his own right execute God's vengeance: but our hands are tied. Again; as he represented Christ, so he put upon him pure and uncorrupt affections, so that he indulged not his own anger, but rendered faithful service to God. To be short, he executed God's judgment after the same manner as it is lawful for us to pray that the Lord himself should punish the ungodly. For as we are not armed with the sword, it is our duty to repair to the heavenly judge: but we must with composed mind beseech him to shew himself our avenger, and we must beware that we shake not off the bridle of the Spirit, and so let our desires run riot. As for David, his calling required that he should compel rebels to submit to him, and be God's lawful minister in punishing all manner of wickedness.

12 *By this I know, &c.*] Now comes he to giving of thanks; unless perhaps, by altering the tense of the verb, any one would desire to unite it to the next verse thus: *In this shall I know that thou favourest me, if thou suffer not mine enemies to triumph over me.* But it suits better as an expression of joy. For after he has offered up his prayers, now he ascribes his deliverance to God, and declares it to be a manifest and singular benefit of his. Nevertheless, it may be asked whether this be a sufficiently sure knowledge of God's love towards us, when he suffers not our enemies to triumph over us. For it happens often that some man is delivered out of danger, who, notwithstanding, is not in God's favour. Besides, God's good pleasure is not known by bare experience, but chiefly by his word. The answer is easy; that David was not void of faith, but, for the confirmation thereof, embraced the helps that God added afterwards to his word. Add to this, that he seems to denote, not the general favour which God vouchsafeth to all the faithful, but his special favour whereby he was chosen to be king; as if he had said, Now, Lord, I am strengthened more and more in belief of the adoption which thou hast vouchsafed to me, that I should be the first-begotten among

the kings of the earth. By this means he extends God's help, (by which he had been delivered from one distress,) to the whole state of the realm.

13 *And I said, Thou shalt, &c.*] Some expound it, that because David followed uprightness, therefore God stretched out his hand to him. But this agrees not very well with the former sentence, where he confessed himself to be justly punished. And although his misery were exposed to the vaunting of his enemies, yet it is not likely that they were the authors of it. Therefore it had been out of season to have made mention of his soundness to this end; for the Lord is then said to have respect to our soundness, when he defendeth us from the wrong of men. Then must we seek another sense. And truly soundness may be referred as well to the body as to the mind, in this wise; I shall stand safe and sound because thou shalt uphold me and restore me. Nevertheless, he seems to extend God's grace yet further; as if he should say, he had not been helped by his hand once only, but his welfare had been upheld by his power the whole time that he had lived in prosperity. If any one had rather understand it of godliness and pure affection, which will suit very well, David boasts not of his life past; but in the very examination thereof, although Satan and the wicked went about to shake his faith, yet he declares that he was not withdrawn from the fear of God. Therefore by this means he would allege his patience, that being sore harassed and shaken, yet he turned not aside from uprightness. Now if this sentence be allowed, it is to be noted, that immediately after, this benefit (namely, that David stood unvanquished, and manfully sustained those assaults of temptations) is ascribed to God; and that for the time to come David looks not for any other support than at the hand of God. If he speak of his outward state, the text also will flow well with it, that God will not make an end of his grace before he have brought his servants safe even unto the end. And he is said to *establish those before his face* whom he defendeth in suchwise, that he sheweth his fatherly care towards them by evident tokens, even as he is said to hide his face from them, when he seemeth to forget them. In the last verse he confirms and repeats the thanksgiving which he touched upon just now; and in expressing the God of Israel by name, he testifies that the covenant which was made with the fathers is thoroughly rooted in his heart, because his deliverance had flowed out of that fountain. The repeated *So be it*, is put to denote vehemence, that all the godly should be the more effectually stirred up to praise God.

PSALM XLII.

First David shews that when he wandered as an outlaw, by reason of Saul's cruelty, nothing grieved him more than that he was prevented access to the sanctuary, because he preferred the service of God before all earthly advantages. Secondly, he shews how hard an encounter he had with despair. Also, to strengthen his hope, he intermingles prayer, and meditation on God's grace. Last of all, he repeats that inward conflict which he had with his sorrow.

[*To the chief chanter. An Instruction to the sons of Korah.*]

2 Like as the hart crieth for the springs of water, so crieth my soul unto thee, O God.

3 My soul hath thirsted after God, even after the living God: when shall I enter in, that I may appear before the face of God?

4 My tears were my bread day and night: while they daily say unto me, Where is thy God?

1 *To the sons of Korah.*] Because the name of David is not written on this Psalm, many conjecture that the sons of Korah were the authors of it, which I approve not of at all. For, seeing it is composed in the person of David, whom we know to have excelled all others in the spirit of prophecy, who will believe that it was dictated to him by any other? He was the common teacher of the whole church, and the distinguished instrument of the Holy Ghost. He had delivered other Psalms to the Levites to sing, of which number the sons of Korah were. What need had he, then, to beg of them to lend him their help for that which he was far better able to perform than they? To me, therefore, it seems likely, that the reason why the sons of Korah are named is, that it was committed to their custody as a treasure, according as we know that the singers were chosen to be keepers, some of one Psalm and some of another. The suppression of David's name creates no difficulty, because we see the same done in other Psalms, of which, notwithstanding, one may gather by sure evidence that he was the author. The word מַשְׂכִּיל I have somewhat touched upon already in Ps. xxxii. I confess, indeed, that the word is not always added whenever David reports himself to have been chastised by God's rod. Nevertheless it is to be noted, that it agrees properly with chastisements, the end whereof is to discipline God's children, when they profit not suffici-

ently by doctrine. Also, they are not altogether agreed upon the time. For some will have David to complain here of his misfortune, when he was deposed by his son Absalom. But, led by good reasons, if I mistake not, I rather incline to the contrary opinion. For Absalom's conspiracy was soon suppressed, so that it kept not David any long time from coming to the sanctuary. But in this place he bewails expressly a long exile, under which he almost pined to death. For it is not the sorrow of a few days, which he describes in the third verse. Nay, rather the whole context will clearly shew that he lay a long time in this wretched state of which he speaks. The argument they set up, that the ark of the covenant was neglected in the reign of Saul, so that it is not likely that David led the stated choral performances in that time, is not very strong. For although Saul worshipped not God otherwise than as a matter of form, yet he was unwilling to appear undevout. And David himself has shewn elsewhere that he frequented the holy assemblies diligently, especially upon festival-days. Surely, that which we shall see in Ps. lv., namely, *We went together*, or *with one mind, into the house of the Lord*, pertains to Saul's time.

2 *Like as the hart crieth, &c.*] These two verses contain nothing else but that David preferred free access to the sanctuary, that he might cherish and strengthen his faith and devotion with the exercises commanded by the law, before all advantages, riches, pleasures, yea and honours. For when he says he cried to the living God, it is not taken simply to burn with love and longing after God; but we must call to mind after what sort God allureth us to him, and by what helps he lifteth our minds upwards. For he biddeth us not climb at once into heaven: but, favouring our weakness, he cometh down nearer to us. David then cried to God, considering that the way was closed to him, because he was excluded from the outward services, which is a bond of holy conjunction with God. Not that ceremonies of themselves purchase us God's favour, but because they are exercises of devotion, which our weakness cannot do without. David, therefore, being banished from the sanctuary, is no less grieved than if he had been estranged from God himself. Truly, he ceased not meanwhile to direct his prayers to heaven, yea and to the very sanctuary itself. But, considering his own infirmity, he took it sore to heart, that the way whereby the faithful come to God was shut against him. By which example is put to shame the arrogance of such as pass over these means without regard, or rather proudly despise them, as though it lay in their power to fly

up to heaven in a moment, as if forsooth they surpassed David in zeal and alacrity of mind. And yet the prophet stays not in these earthly elements; but because he knew he wanted wings wherewith to fly, he used ladders to climb up to God. The similitude of the hart expresses a singular earnestness of desire. The exposition of some, that rivers are eagerly sought by harts to refresh themselves after weariness, is perhaps too restricted. Indeed I confess, that if hunters press a hart in the chase, and the hounds follow hard after him, he gathers new strength if he meet with a river. But we know also that, at certain times of the year, harts desire water with incredible longings, and more intensely than could proceed from mere thirst, which longing I suppose to be denoted here by the prophet, although I contend not for the matter. The latter verse shews more manifestly what I have said; namely, that David speaks not simply of the presence of God, but with a circumstance, because he sets before himself the tabernacle, the altar, the sacrifices, and the other ceremonies by which God had given assurance that he would be nigh unto his people. And so it behoved the faithful to make their beginning at those things, when they desired to approach God; not that they should continue fixed on them, but that they should by the help of signs seek God's glory, which of itself is hidden from the sight. Then, wheresoever we have marks of God's presence engraven in his word or sacraments, we may say, with David, that there is the face of God, provided we bring pure hearts to seek him spiritually. And when we imagine God to be present otherwise than he hath disclosed himself in his word and sacraments, or conceive anything gross, or earthly, of his heavenly majesty, we make mere phantoms which disfigure God's glory, and turn his truth into a lie.

4 *My tears were my bread.*] He mentions another shaft of sorrow with which the reprobate and malevolent wounded his mind, and there is no doubt Satan used such means as these to fan the flame that consumed him. What meanest thou? Seest thou not that God hath cast thee off? For surely his will is to be worshipped in his tabernacle, from access to which thou art prevented and banished. These were desperate assaults, calculated to shatter the faith of the holy man, had he not made vigorous resistance, supported by such power of the Spirit as is rarely enjoyed. And it is apparent with what earnest affection he was touched; for it may befall us to be oftentimes moved, and yet not so that we should decline our meat and drink. But when a man willingly forsakes his meat, and gives himself to weeping so that he rejects his daily food, and is continually

mourning, it appears he is not lightly vexed. David then says he derived not more comfort from anything than weeping; and therefore that he gave himself to it no less than men are wont to delight and refresh themselves with feeding: and that not for a short time, but daily. It is to be borne in mind, therefore, that as often as the ungodly trample upon us, and spitefully taunt us that God is against us, they are moved by Satan, that he may overthrow our faith; and so there is no time for dalliance when so dangerous a war is waged against us. Also there is another reason to move us to this sorrowing, namely, that the name of God is scorned by the ungodly: for they cannot scoff at our faith without reproach to him. Therefore, if we are not steel-hearted, we must needs be wounded with bitterest sorrow.

5 When I bethink me of these things, I pour out my soul upon me, because I passed in the number leading them even to the house of God, in the voice of rejoicing and prayer, *as* a multitude that danced for joy.

6 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou unquiet within me? Wait on God; for yet will I confess unto him the helps of his countenance.

7 My God, my soul is cast down upon me when I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of Hermonim from mount Mizar.

5 *When I bethink me, &c.*] This verse is somewhat obscure, by reason of the variety of times. Notwithstanding, I doubt not but the natural sense is, that when David called his former state to remembrance, he felt more heaviness from the comparison. I say his remembering of the time past had no small influence in augmenting his miseries, that he should now be debarred from the temple, who had been a captain and a standardbearer to the rest in frequenting holy assemblies. We know that those who have been enured to misery from their childhood, become callous; and the very continuance of miseries breeds a certain hardness in us. No marvel therefore, though David, who had not been one of the common sort, but lately a leader of the foremost ranks among the faithful, be more grievously disquieted than others, seeing himself utterly shaken off, and not to have so much as the lowest place left him. Thus I connect the demonstrative pronoun *these*, with the declaration following, thus; namely, that David remembered how he was wont to march in the number of the godly, and to

lead them to the house of God. *To pour out the soul,* is metaphorically expounded by some, *to utter forth his sorrows;* and with others, it implies as much as to have gladness diffused over one. But to me, he seems rather to say that his affections were melted, whether it were for joy or sorrow. For when the soul of man which sustains him so long as it keeps its energy collected, is dissolved by immoderate affection, it as it were vanishes. Therefore he is said to pour out his soul who is not master of himself, so as to prevent his wits being scattered and running out; as if David should say, his soul melts and faints for sorrow when he remembers from whence he is fallen. If you have a mind to understand it of gladness, the comparison will be after this sort: It was such a pleasure to me in time past to lead ranks of people to the sanctuary, that my heart melted for joy, and I was not master of myself; and if I might have the same happy lot restored me again, it would ravish my senses with the same gladness. Notwithstanding, I have shewn before what I liked best. Nevertheless it is not to be thought that David was overwhelmed with sorrow after the manner of men: but as he formed a judgment of God's wrath by his present misery; he disquieted himself after a godly sort, because he had provoked God's displeasure towards him through his own fault. And to let this pass, we see whence this sorrow was conceived. For being weighed down with so many private distresses, he is grieved only for the sanctuary, that he may shew that it were less grief to him to forego his life, than to be banished from God's presence. And it becomes us to temper our affections after the same sort; namely, that our gladness may have respect to God's fatherly goodwill; and that the cause of our grief may be to have him displeased. For this is the sorrow that is according to God, whereof Paul makes mention, 2 Cor. vii. 10. I doubt not that by *number*, which in Hebrew is called סַךְ, David meant *ranks;* because they went not confusedly or in a throng, but in regular ranks, when they came to the tabernacle upon the holy days.

6 *Why art thou cast down &c.*] It appears hereby that David wrestled manfully with his sorrow, lest he might yield to temptation. But we may note that he had a sore and hard encounter before he could come out victorious; or rather that he could not be rid with one or two assaults or battles, but was often called back to new combats. And no marvel though he were so sore stricken, since he met with no sign of God's favour. Moreover David sets himself before us as a man divided into two parts. For so far forth as he leans on God's promises by faith, he rises up armed with

the spirit of invincible fortitude against the affections of his flesh, to keep them under; and at the same time chastises his own weakness. And although he wage war against the devil and the world, yet fights he not with them directly or openly, but rather makes himself his own antagonist. And surely the best way to overcome Satan, is not to go out of ourselves, but to undertake inward battle against our own affections. Also it is to be noted that David confesses that his soul was cast down. For when our infirmities rise up as it were a flood, because we now suppose that our faith is lost, we are so overcome with the mere dread of it that we dare not come to actual battle. Therefore as often as this cowardliness shall creep upon us, let it come to our remembrance that this is the ordinary encounter of the godly, to reclaim their own affections, and especially to wage battle against distrust. Furthermore, here are set down two vices, diverse in appearance, which yet assault our minds jointly; namely, discouragement and unquietness. For while we lie prostrate, yet at the same time does unquietness drive us also to murmuring. The remedy of them both is added; namely, hope in God, which alone causes our minds first to stand firm in the midst of the greatest storms, and secondly, to quiet themselves with patience. Afterwards David expresses very well the force and nature of hope in these words, *yet will I confess unto thee;* namely, that it carries our minds away to behold the grace that is hidden. For by this word *yet*, he confesses that his mouth is stopped for the present time, so that he cannot sing God's praises, because that although he is pressed on all sides with distress, yet he extends his hope to a long time. And that he may emerge from his present heaviness, he promises himself the thing that appears not. And yet he imagines not anything rashly of his own head; but trusting to God's promises, he is both encouraged to hope well, and also warrants himself assured deliverance. For otherwise we shall not be sufficient witnesses of God's grace to our brethren, if we witness it not first to ourselves in our own hearts. The portion that follows may be expounded diversely. The greater part of interpreters supply the word *for*, that it might denote the matter or cause of thanksgiving, thus: *Yet will I give praise* or *thanks to him for the helps of his countenance;* which I willingly admit. Although the sense will not be inappropriate if we read separately, *that God's countenance is our help;* because as soon as he vouchsafeth to look upon his servants, he setteth them in safety. For God's countenance is taken for the declaration of his favour, because his face then

shineth serenely; even as adversity darkens it or overcasts it with clouds.

7 *My God, my soul, &c.*] If you like to suppose nothing understood, the verse will consist of two distinct sentences. For word for word it is thus: *My God, my soul is cast down upon me, therefore will I remember thee, &c.* But the greater part of interpreters expound עַל־כֵּן because that it may be a rendering of a cause. And surely it will agree very well that David's sorrow was increased as often as he applied his mind to the recollection of the sanctuary, out of the land of Jordan in which he lay hid as a banished man. But if it is thought proper to make a distinction in the verse, you must bear in mind, that his musing upon God in his banishment is not to nourish his grief, but to assuage it. For he played not the part of those that find no solace but in forgetting God. But being wounded by his hand, he nevertheless acknowledges him to be his physician. And so the sentence will imply as much as if he had said, Although I am now banished from the temple, and seem to be an alien from the household of God, yet shall not all this prevent me from having an eye to him: for howsoever I am deprived of sacrifices, which might be a furtherance to me, yet hath he not bereft me of his word. But as the former sense is more received, and also seems to be added instead of an exposition, it is best not to depart from it: David then complains that his soul is oppressed with sorrow, because he saw himself cast out from the church of God. And herein there is an implied contrast; as if he should say, he is not so much disquieted with longing for his wife, or house, or any goods, as with this only care, that he sees himself shut out from the presence of God. And hence we must learn that although we are debarred the helps which God hath ordained to the edifying of our faith and devotion, yet must we diligently sharpen our minds that forgetfulness of God creep not upon us. But this is the thing to be chiefly noted; that as in the last verse we saw David encounter like a stout champion his own affections, so now is shewn by what means he held out steadfastly; namely, because he fled to God for succour, as to a holy sanctuary. And surely, unless meditation on God's promises provoke us to praying, it will be too weak to sustain us. For how is it possible for us to get the upperhand of so many evil thoughts which obtrude upon us every instant, unless God give us strength? For man's soul is as it were a workshop to Satan, for forging a thousand methods of despair. Wherefore not without cause does David, after

long striving with himself, retire straightway to prayer, and call God to witness his grief. By *the land of Jordan* is meant the country, which in respect of Judah was beyond the river of Jordan; which is proved the better by the name *Hermonim*, or *Hermons*. For so is the coast that lies all along mount Hermon called in the plural number, by reason of its diverse tops; and perhaps he put the plural number on purpose, because fear forced him to run up and down, and wander hither and thither. Many interpret the word *Mizar* small, and will that it be indirectly compared with mount Sion, as though David preferred a mountain otherwise small before a very high one; which seems to me to be constrained.

8 Depth calleth unto depth at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and all thy floods have passed upon me.

9 In the day-time shall the Lord grant his loving-kindness; and in the night-time shall I sing of him, *even* a prayer to the God of my life.

8 *Depth calleth unto, &c.*] In these words is expressed as well the grievousness as the accumulation and long continuance of his miseries; as if he had said, he had not been oppressed with one kind of misery only, but that various forms of distress recurred from time to time, so that there was no end nor measure. First, by the name of *depth*, he shews that the temptations wherewith he was assaulted might worthily be compared to sea-gulfs. Afterwards he complains of their long continuance, and that in a most apt figure; namely, that his temptations call one unto another from afar, and one summons another. In the second part of the verse he pursues the metaphor, that *all the waves and floods of God had passed over his head.* By which words he means, that he was overwhelmed, and as it were swallowed up by the multitude of afflictions. But it is to be noted, that he calls the cruelty of Saul and other his enemies *God's floods*, that we may always bear in mind to humble ourselves in all adversities under the mighty hand of God, which afflicteth us. And it is worth the labour to proceed yet further; that if it please God to rain down violently upon us, as soon as he hath opened his sluices or waterspouts, there will be no end of our miseries till he is appeased. For he hath wondrous and unknown means wherewith to persecute us. And so when his wrath is waxed hot against us, there shall not be one depth alone to

swallow us, but deep shall call on deep. And because the sluggishness of men is such, that they fear not God's threats enough, as often as mention is made of his vengeance, let us call this verse to mind.

9 *In the day-time, &c.*] Although the verb is of the future tense, yet I deny not that it may be resolved into the preter tense, as some do, who think that David gathers together God's former benefits, that he may expostulate with the greater force concerning the sorrowful and miserable state in which he is now suffering; as if he had said, How comes it to pass, that God, who hath shewn himself so merciful to me heretofore, should now, as it were, alter his mind, and manifest extreme rigour? But as there is no cogent reason for changing the time of the verb, and the other exposition seems to suit the text better, let us follow it. For my part I do not strenuously deny that David, for the strengthening of his faith, alleges the benefits of God, which he had had experience of: nevertheless, I think that he promises himself deliverance hereafter, though it be hid from him as yet; and therefore I would not quarrel about the time past, or the time to come, provided it be fully agreed upon that David reasons in this wise: Why should I not hope that God will be merciful to me, so that his lovingkindness may meet me in the day-time, and the song of gladness lodge with me at night? Surely he sets this comfort against the sorrow which he might conceive from the dreadful tokens of God's wrath, which he rehearsed in the last verse. The *prayer*, whereof he makes mention in the end, is not the prayer of an afflicted or sorrowful person, but it comprehends an expression of the joy felt when God cheereth us with his favour, and unlocketh the door of access to him: and therefore he terms him the God of his life, because from this knowledge springs cheerfulness of heart.

10 I will say to God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? wherefore go I mourning while mine enemy oppresseth me?

11 Slaughter is in my bones, while mine enemies offer me reproach, saying to me daily, Where is thy God?

12 Why art thou cast down, my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Put thy trust in God; for I will yet confess unto him, the helps of my countenance, and my God.

10 *I will say to God my rock, &c.*] If we read the last

verse in the time past, the sense will be: Since God hath shewn him so beneficent to me heretofore, I will pray with so much the more boldness, for experience shall make me bold. If any one choose the time to come, David will join his prayer to the reflections he had conceived from faith. And surely, whosoever believes that which he said just now concerning God's fatherly favour, will also pray the more cheerfully after his example. Therefore the sense will be such as this: Forasmuch as I assure myself of God's favour, that he will send forth his mercy to me in the day-time, and continue the same, so that I may have occasion to sing of him in the night; I will the more frankly bewail my miseries unto him, saying: *Lord, my rock, why hast thou forgotten me?* Furthermore; by this complaint the faithful mean not that they are utterly rejected of God: for unless they believed themselves to be under his care and protection, it were in vain for them to call upon him; but they speak so according to the sense of the flesh. Wherefore this *forgetting* is referred as well to the outward appearance, as to the unquietness wherewith the faithful are troubled according to the flesh; although in the meantime they persuade themselves by faith, that God regardeth them, and that his ears will not be deaf to hear them.

11 *Slaughter is in my bones.*] Although the sentence be crabbed in expression, yet in the effect of the matter there is no obscurity. For David avouches that he was pierced with no less grief through the reproaches of his enemies, than if they had bored through his bones. Because ברצח signifies *to slay*, I have retained the idea in translating it. And yet I disallow not their opinion, who translate it *a slaughtering sword.* There is however a difference in the reading, for some put ב, the mark of similitude, instead of כ. For my part, as the matter is doubtful, I thought best to leave the letter out altogether, which most commonly is superfluous. But as for the matter itself, as I said before, the case is plain, saving that the interpreters consider not sufficiently, that under the term *bones* is denoted the bitterness of sorrow, which is felt more acutely by striking of the bones, than if a sword should be thrust through the bowels or other yielding parts of the body. Neither should the children of God think this similitude hyperbolical. And if any one marvel why David took the scoffing of his enemies so sore to heart, he bewrays his own insensibility. For among all the sorest miseries, nothing can happen more direful, than when our faith is mortally assaulted by the wounds inflicted on God's majesty. Paul's doctrine concerning the persecution of Ishmael is known, Gal. iv. 29. For

although many deem lightly of his childish jesting, yet, because it tended to this end, that God's covenant should be but a toy to play with, by the judgment of the Holy Ghost, it is to be counted a most cruel persecution. Therefore, not unworthily does David compare the taunts of his enemies, whereby he saw God's word together with his own faith trampled under foot, to a slaughtering sword that pierces through the bones and marrow. And would God that as many as boast themselves to be God's children, would learn to bear their private wrongs more contentedly; and when their faith is assaulted to the dishonour of God, yea, and the word also that gives them life is included in the same reproach, to put on this zeal of David's!

12 *Why art thou cast down, &c.*] This repetition admonishes us, that David had not so vanquished his temptations at one encounter, but that he was compelled to enter into the same conflict anew; by which example we are warned, that although Satan work us the same trouble, yet must not we faint with weariness. The latter part of the verse has one word different from the sixth verse, while in all things else they agree. For in this place is put *my*, the pronoun relative of the first person; thus, *the helps of* my *countenance*. It is unknown whether there is wanting here the letter ו, which makes the third person. Still, as all books agree in this reading which I have set down, David might without any absurdity term God the help or welfare of his countenance, because he hoped for manifest and assured deliverance, as if God should in a visible manner come forward as his defender. There is no doubt that in this place God is called his *help* or *welfare* by apposition, for immediately after follows, *and my God*.

PSALM XLIII.

This Psalm is akin to the last. For David, who in all likelihood is the author of it, being chased and driven out of his country by the unjust violence and tyranny of his enemies, calls upon God for vengeance, and encourages himself to hope for restoration.

1 Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against the merciless generation: rid me from the deceitful and wicked man.

2 For thou art the God of my strength: wherefore art thou estranged from me? why go I heavily while mine enemy oppresseth me?

3 Send thy light and thy truth: let them guide me, let them lead me to the hill of thy holiness, and to thy tabernacles.

4 And I will enter in unto the altar of God, to the God of the joy of my gladness: and I will praise thee upon the harp, O God, my God.

5 Why dost thou cast thyself down, O my soul? and why art thou so disquieted within me? Put thy trust in the Lord: for I will yet praise him, the help of my countenance, and my God.

1 *Judge me, O God, &c.*] First, David expostulates upon the cruelty of his enemies, but yet soon after he will shew that nothing grieved him more than to be barred from access to the sanctuary. And it is a token of a good conscience, that he commends the defence of his cause to God. For this *judging*, which he puts here in the first place, is nought else but to undertake the defending of his cause. And soon afterwards he expresses his meaning more clearly, by *pleading his cause*. The sum of his desire was, to be delivered from wicked and mischievous persons, by whom he was persecuted unworthily. But, forasmuch as God promiseth not his help but to miserable and guiltless persons that are troubled undeservedly, David first and foremost offers himself to be examined, that when the goodness of his cause is proved and thoroughly seen, he may in the end give him succour. And as most sweet comfort redounds unto us hereby, that God disdains not to sit in inquisition on our cause, so is it vain for us to look that he should revenge our wrongs, except our own innocence stand forth to procure us favour against our adversaries. By *the merciless generation* is meant the whole rout of his enemies who were unmerciful and void of all humanity. That which follows concerning the *man of deceit and wickedness* may indeed be applied to Saul, but it seems rather to be a change of the singular number for the plural.

2 *For thou art the God, &c.*] This verse differs little from the tenth verse of the last Psalm, and that difference consists more in words than in matter. For by setting this shield against temptation, namely, that he had felt God's power present with him, he complains that he goes sadly, because he is as it were abandoned to the lust of his enemies. For as he assumed it for certain and granted that his enemies had no more power to do him harm than the Lord would permit, therefore he demands, as concerning a thing against

reason, how it should come to pass that his enemies prevail, seeing that he is under the assurance and protection of God. And hence he gathers courage to pray to God that he would manifest his favour again, which he seemed to have hid from him for a time. By *light* is meant favour: for as adversities not only obscure God's face, but also overcast the heavens with clouds to usward, so in God's blessing there shines forth a cheerful serenity, or rather the light of life dispels the mist under which we were whelmed in heaviness. And by this word he intimates that all miseries befall us not for any other cause, than that God withdraweth the tokens of his fatherly love, and that as soon as he designeth to shew his serene and smiling countenance, deliverance and salvation come forth. He adds *truth*, because he hoped not for light, but by the promises of God. For although unbelievers covet God's favour, yet lift they not their eyes up to his light, because man's nature is evermore grovelling earthward, unless it be raised up by the word of God. Hereupon then David conceives confidence of God's favour, because God, who is true and cannot deceive, hath promised his servants succour. Therefore the sentence must be resolved thus: Send forth thy light, that it may be unto me a warrant and assurance of thy faithfulness, or that it may in very deed and effect prove thee to be faithful and void of all deceit in thy promises. For although the knowledge of God's favour must be drawn from his word, and faith cannot be stable except it be stayed upon the word, yet experience is no small confirmation, both of the word and of faith, when God stretcheth out his hand to help us. Now he lays down what he covets most, and what is the scope of the restoration he proposes to himself, saying, *Let them guide me, and let them lead me to thy holy hill.* For as the chief cause of his sorrow was to be banished from the congregation of the godly, so also he accounts it to be the chief of all good things to have liberty to enjoy the exercises of godliness, and to worship God in his sanctuary. Also David tacitly makes a vow of thanksgiving; but there is no doubt that by these words is denoted the end of his deliverance which he had an eye to, namely, that he might have free return unto the sanctuary, from whence he was driven and chased by the tyranny of his enemies. And it is eminently worthy of observation, that whereas he was spoiled of wife, goods, house, and all other comforts, he always burned with such longing after the temple, that in a manner he despised all the other things. But it is enough for me to touch upon this briefly now, because I have treated of that so godly affection of his more at large in the last Psalm. Still it is asked how

there should be mention made of mount Sion, which was not appointed to the service of God till after the death of Saul? I find no other way of untying this knot, but that David, inditing this Psalm a long time after, applied that, which otherwise he would have spoken in general of the tabernacle, to the revelation that was given him afterwards; in which there is no absurdity.

4 *And I will enter, &c.*] He promises God a solemn sacrifice in remembrance of his deliverance; for he speaks not only of the daily or ordinary service, but also, under the name of the altar, whereupon peace-offerings were wont to be offered, he expresses that token of thankfulness which I have spoken of; and therefore he terms him the God of his joy, because, being delivered out of sadness into mirth, his mind was bent to acknowledge this benefit openly. And he calls him *the joy of his gladness*, that he may set forth the grace of his deliverance more attractively. For the latter word in the genitive case has the force of an epithet, whereby he signifies that it was no small joy that he was touched with when God restored him to quietness beyond all hope. As for the fifth verse, because I have treated of it in the last Psalm sufficiently, I deem it superfluous to speak of it here.

PSALM XLIV.

This Psalm consists of three principal members. For in the beginning of it the faithful commend the infinite mercy of God towards his people, and the number of proofs whereby he had testified his fatherly love. Afterwards they complain that they find not God favourable to them now as he had been to their fathers of old time. Thirdly, they allege the covenant made with Abraham, which they avouch themselves to have kept with all faithfulness, although they had been sorely afflicted; and at the same time they object that they have been cruelly dealt with for none other cause, but that they continue steadfastly in the pure worship of God. In the end is added a prayer, that God would not despise the wrongful oppression of his servants, especially seeing it redounds to the reproach of religion.

[*An Instruction to the chief chanter of the sons of Korah.*]

It is uncertain who was the author of the Psalm, saving that it manifestly appears to have been composed by any one rather than David. And the complaints which it contains properly agree with that unhappy and calamitous period wherein the outrageous tyranny of Antiochus pre-

vailed, unless perhaps any one would extend it further. For after the return of the Jews from the captivity of Babylon, they were scarcely ever free from severe afflictions. Certainly such matter would not agree with the time of David, under whose reign the church flourished. It may be also that some one of the prophets dedicated this complaint to the people in the very time of the captivity. Still, it is to be noted at the same time, that here is portrayed an image of the church, such as it was shewn that it should be after Christ's time. For Paul, Rom. viii. 26, as will be seen again when we come to it, takes it not as if that were the state of one age, but admonishes us that Christians are ordained to the same miseries, and that it is not for them to hope for any other state unto the world's end, than that which God hath, as it were by way of prelude, shewn in the Jews after their return from captivity. Christ certainly appeared afterwards a redeemer of the church, but not that the flesh should run riot upon earth, but rather that we should wage war under the cross, until we are taken up into the rest of the heavenly kingdom. What is meant by the word משכיל is declared already elsewhere, for although it be now and then employed as a title of mirth, yet it is more commonly used where the subject is distress; for the best kind of instruction is, when the Lord compelleth us to his yoke by taming our fierceness.

2 O God, we have heard with our ears, *and* our fathers have declared unto us, the work that thou didst in their days, *and* in the days of old.

3 Thou dravest out the heathen with thine own hand, and plantedst them: thou destroyedst the nations, and madest them to grow.

4 For they got not the land with their own sword, neither was it their own arm that saved them; but it was thy hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour to them.

2 O God, we have heard, &c.] They recount God's goodness which he had shewn in old time towards their fathers, that by the very dissimilarity of their estate they may provoke him to relieve their miseries. And they profess that they speak not of things dark or doubtful, but recite histories avouched by authors of good credit. For whereas they say they have *heard with their ears*, it is not a superfluity of words, but they express emphatically that the fame of God's grace was so renowned, that all doubt was

taken away. They add that this knowledge was delivered then from hand to hand by those that saw it. Not that the fathers who were delivered out of Egypt declared God's benefits to their offspring a thousand and five hundred years after; but because not only the first deliverance, but also the sundry helps which God had given to his people from time to time, as it were in an uninterrupted series, came from hand to hand even to the last age. As, therefore, they who after many hundred years became witnesses and heralds of God's grace, spake upon the report of the first generation, the faithful have a right to say that they knew that of a certainty which was declared to them by their fathers, because the knowledge thereof had not become lost by process of time, but was still fresh by reason of uninterrupted remembrance of it. The effect is, that God was not beneficent to the children of Abraham for ten or twenty years only, but that he had never ceased from continual proofs of his favour from the first time that he had thrown his arms around them.

3 *Thou dravest out, &c.*] It is an exposition of the former verse. For he had not as yet expressly declared the said work of God so renowned by the report of the fathers. Now therefore he adds that God with his own hand drove out the heathen, to plant the children of Abraham in their room, and that he undid them to increase the children of Abraham. He compares the old inhabitants of the land of Canaan to trees, because they had taken root there by long continued possession. Therefore the sudden alteration that happened was as if a man should pluck up trees by the roots, and plant others in their stead. But forasmuch as it had not been enough for the people to have been planted in one day, there is added another metaphor, whereby the faithful shew how it came to pass, through the blessing of the Lord, that the chosen people multiplied, like as in process of time a tree is the more strengthened in the place that it occupies, by spreading forth as well his boughs as his roots. And it is worth while to mark to what end the faithful now set forth this grace of God. For oftentimes there springs up in us occasion of despair, in that we surmise ourselves to be rejected of God, because he continueth not the same benefits towards us which he vouchsafed to our fathers. But it were against reason that the faithful who prepare themselves to praying should hinder their confidence with such an objection. I confess, indeed, that it is true, that the more it comes to our mind what benefits God hath bestowed upon others, the greater the grief with which we are stung when he succoureth not our adversities. But faith guides us to

another conclusion; namely, to persuade ourselves that we also shall at length feel some relief, because God remaineth always the same. And no doubt the reason why the faithful now call to remembrance the things that God had done for the welfare of his church in old time is this; namely, to raise themselves up to better hope, as has been seen in the beginning of Psalm xxii. For they linger not in the bare comparison that would divorce those that have been preserved by the power of God in times past, and those that travail and groan now under afflictions: but rather they set before themselves the bond of holy communion in the covenant of God, to gather therefrom that whatsoever goodness the church has at any time experienced at God's hand heretofore, the same pertains now also unto them. Indeed they find fault with God in their first words, demanding what he means by breaking off his fatherly favour; but straightway they bethink themselves, because there comes into their minds a new thought concerning the faithfulness and constancy of God, who hath adopted them no less than their fathers. However it is no marvel though contrary affections encounter each other in the minds of the faithful, even while they be praying. But the Holy Ghost, by assuaging the violence of sorrow, pacifieth all complaints with patience and a zeal to obey. Furthermore, when they say that the said deliverance was declared to them by their fathers, it corresponds with the precept of the law, wherein the fathers are charged to teach their children. And the faithful must bear in mind that the same burden is laid upon them also at this day. For he deposits the doctrine of salvation in their custody to this end; that they should transmit it to their posterity, and, as much as in them lies, endeavour to extend the empire thereof, that the cultivation of it may flourish from age to age.

4 *For they got not, &c.*] He confirms by contraries that which he taught just now. For if they got not the inheritance of the land by their own force and policy, it follows that they were planted by another's hand. For although there went a great multitude of men out of Egypt, yet as they were unfit for war, and accustomed only to slavish works, they would soon have been consumed by their enemies, who far excelled them in munitions and strength. Finally, the people were by evident signs certified, as well of their own weakness as of God's strength, so that they ought of duty to confess both that the land was not conquered by their own puissance, and also that they were preserved by the hand of God. And to *hand* is added *arm*, to amplify the matter, that we may know that they were not preserved

by any ordinary means. The *light of his countenance* is in this place, as in divers others, taken for the declaration of his favour. For as God after a sort cloudeth and wrinkleth his face by overcasting it with distresses, so again when the Israelites upon assurance of their strength overthrew their enemies far and wide without any great difficulty, they beheld his face clear and bright, as if he had shewn himself openly to be near at hand to them. And here the reasoning which the prophet uses is observable; namely, that the people inherit the land by the free gift of God, because they got it not by their own power. For then do we begin to yield to God that which is his, when we weigh how worthless our own strength is. And surely the reason why men for the most part enviously bury God's benefits, takes its rise only from this, that through false imagination they challenge somewhat to themselves as their own. Therefore the best manner of thankfulness is, to banish the fond opinion of our own ableness. Afterwards follows a more glorious commendation of God's grace, where the whole cause is imputed to God's good pleasure. For the prophet supposes not any worthiness in the person of Abraham, nor feigns any deserts in his posterity, that God should deal so bountifully with them, but ascribes the whole to God's good pleasure; which seems to be taken out of Moses' protestation, *God hath not chosen you because ye were more than other nations, or better than they, but because he loved your fathers;* Deut. iv. 37. Now, although here special mention is made of the land of Canaan, yet the prophet took a general ground, why God vouchsafed to reckon that people in his flock. And certainly this is the fountain and original of the church; namely, the free love of God; and whatsoever benefits God bestows upon his church, they flow out of the same fountain. Therefore the reason why we are gathered into the church, and cherished and defended by the hand of God, is not to be sought elsewhere than in God. Neither treats he here of God's universal benevolence, which extends itself to all mankind, but the elect people are distinguished from the rest of the world, and for difference sake are referred to the mere goodwill of God.

5 Thou thyself art my King, O God send help unto Jacob.

6 In thee have we stricken our adversaries with our horn: in thy name have we trodden them under foot that rose up against us.

7 For I will not put my trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.

8 Truly it is thou that hast saved us from our enemies, and put those that hate us to shame.

9 In God will we praise all the day long, and confess unto thy name for ever and ever.

5 *Thou thyself art my king, &c.*] In this verse they express somewhat more plainly what I touched upon a little before; namely, that God's goodness not only was apparent in delivering his people, but also flowed upon them continually from age to age; and therefore he says, *Thou thyself art my king.* For, in my judgment, the pronoun demonstrative הוּא imports as much as if the prophet should to the first deliverance unite a long series of God's benefits, so that it might appear that God, who had once been the deliverer of his people, continued to be the selfsame still to their posterity. Unless perhaps it be put emphatically for assurance sake, that excluding all others, and bidding them farewell, they should praise God as the only maintainer of their welfare. From hence also fetch they a prayer, that God would ordain and send forth new deliverances to his people; for inasmuch as he hath innumerable ways of saving in his hand, he is said to send forth deliverances, as it were messengers, whithersoever he thinketh good.

6 *In thee have we, &c.*] The prophet shews in what wise God hath shewn himself king of the people; namely, in giving them so much strength, that all their enemies stood in fear of them. For the similitude taken from bulls makes to this effect, that they were endued with more than man's strength; so that whatsoever came in their way, they pushed it down with their horns and trampled it under their feet. *In God*, and *in the name of God*, import the same, saving that the latter expression signifies that the people had therefore gotten the upperhand, because they fought under God's standard. Howbeit, what they had spoken lately concerning their fathers, they now apply to themselves, because they were of the body of the same church; and they do it advisedly, to gather confidence. For if they should separate themselves from their fathers, the distinction made would, after a sort, break off the course of God's grace. And forasmuch as they confess that whatsoever God hath bestowed upon their forefathers, is bestowed upon themselves, they may fearlessly desire him to continue his work. Moreover that is to be remembered which I told you just

now; namely, that the reason why they ascribe their victories wholly to God is, that they were able to compass nothing like it by their own sword, or their own bow. For this antithesis better illustrates God's grace, when we consider how great is our own weakness, and how worthless we are without God. Therefore they repeat again how they were saved by the divine power, and that their enemies were driven out and put to shame by the same God.

9 *We will praise God, &c.*] It is the conclusion of the first part. For in effect they acknowledge God's goodness to have been so great in all ages towards the children of Abraham, that there was continual occasion of thanksgiving. For just as though they were now actually beholding them, they acknowledge that they owe continual praise to God; because they had flourished, not in one age or for a small time, but for successive ages. For whatsoever prosperity had befallen them, they impute to his grace. And truly, then is the gladness conceived from prosperity, holy and duly tempered, when it bursts forth in the praises of God. Therefore let us remember that this verse has relation to that time, in which God followed his people with his favour; and secondly, that the faithful here witness their own thankfulness, when laying aside all false bragging, they confess all their victories whereby they had been advanced, to have come from God, and that it was by his power only that they had continued hitherto in safety. And thirdly, that they had not had matter of joy ministered to them once or twice only, but divers proofs of his fatherly lovingkindness had been exhibited during a long and uninterrupted period, so that the long possession thereof ought of right to establish their hope.

10 Nevertheless, thou hast loathed us and put us to shame; and thou goest not forth with our armies.

11 Thou hast turned our back upon the persecutor; and they that hate us have made a spoil of us to themselves.

12 Thou hast given us as sheep to be eaten; and hast scattered us among the heathen.

13 Thou hast sold thy people without gain, and hast not enhanced the prices of them.

14 Thou hast made us a reproach to our neighbours, a jest and a laughingstock to them that be round about us.

15 Thou hast made us a by-word to the heathen, and a nodding of the head among nations.

10 *Nevertheless, thou hast loathed us, &c.*] Now follows the expostulation in which they bewail their present miseries and extreme calamity. And here is described such a revolution as not only witnesses God to have ceased from his accustomed goodwill, but also to have become an open adversary and enemy to his people. First they complain that they are cast off for hatred; for so signifies the word זנחת properly, which we with others have translated *loathed*, though if any man had rather translate it *to forget*, or *to be far off*, I will not strive against him. They add afterwards that they were made a reproach; namely, because all things must needs go ill with them when they were bereft of God's protection. Which also they declare soon after, when they say that God *goeth not forth* with them as their captain or standardbearer when they go to battle. Afterwards they extend their complaints yet further, that God hath made them run away, and that he hath given them over to be spoiled and eaten up. For as holy men are fully persuaded that men are strong and valiant so far forth as God maintaineth them with his secret power, they determine that in their flight and amazedness, fear is stricken into them by God, so that both reason and courage failed the wretched souls. And this opinion is taken out of the law, Deut. xxxii. 30, where Moses says; *How should a thousand flee before one man, or how should two men chase ten thousand, but because the Lord hath delivered us, and shut us up in the hands of our enemies?* Seeing then that the faithful were assured of this, they impute it not to fortune that they were panick struck at the sight of their enemies, whom they were wont before to assault vigorously and fearlessly, but they think that their discomfiture comes to pass by appointment from heaven. And as before they confessed that their former strength was God's gift, so on the contrary, they acknowledge that their fear is stricken into them by God also. Now when God hath broken their hearts in suchwise, they say they lie open to the lust of their enemies. For so I interpret the portion לבז, that their enemies rifled them as their prey, at their pleasure, and without any resistance. To the same purpose pertains also that other comparison, where they say they were given over to be devoured. Whereby the prophet signifies, that they were already vanquished before the battle, and fell down of themselves at the feet of their enemies, that they might fill their maw with

them. And it is to be noted, that God is made the author of these miseries, not in the way of murmuring against him, but that the faithful may the more boldly seek relief at the same hand that smote them and wounded them. And surely it is not possible that they who impute their miseries to fortune, should flee earnestly unto God, or wait for help and salvation at his hand. Wherefore that God may remedy our miseries, it behoves us to believe not that they happen by chance or casualty, but that they are laid upon us by the hand of God. Moreover, when they have said that they are cast down by their enemies, they add at the same time that they were scattered among the heathen, which scattering was bitterer to them than a hundred deaths. For as the whole glory and felicity of that people consisted in this point, that being gathered together under one God and one king, they were one body; to be mingled with the heathen like members severed from the body, was a sign of extreme malediction.

13 *Thou hast sold thy people, &c.*] In saying that they were sold without gain, they mean that they were set to sale as vile bondslaves that were worth nothing. Also in the second member they seem to allude to the custom of cheapening. For we know that bondsmen were not wont to be delivered to the buyers before the price of them was increased by bidding. They mean then, that as they were accounted worthless, they were cast out, so that their case was far worse than that of all bondslaves. And in that they turn themselves to God rather than to their enemies, of whose pride and cruelty they had just cause to complain, we may learn that nothing is better or more advantageous for us, than to think upon God's providence and judgment in our adversity. For although when men trouble us, we have to deal with the devil, who goads them on, yet we must mount to God himself that we may know that we are tried and examined by him, either to chastise us, or to subdue the sinful affections of our flesh, or else to humble and to discipline us to the denial of ourselves. Now when we hear that the fathers who lived under the law were treated so injuriously, there is no reason why any reproaches should cast down our hearts, if God at any time compel us to endure the same. For God is not said here to have simply sold a people, but to have sold his own people, as though now his own inheritance had seemed worthless in his sight. The same thing also may we bewail in our prayers at this day, provided our faith be stayed up with this example, that our hearts faint not, how much soever we be afflicted. In Isaiah, lii. 3, God saith he hath sold his people

for nought in another sense; namely, to shew that it will be no trouble at all to him to ransom them, because he is not bound to the terms of those that had bought them.

14 *Thou hast made us, &c.*] He speaks of his neighbours, who bare either grudge or open hatred to the people of God. And oftentimes it happens that neighbourhood, which ought to avail to produce mutual love, engenders envy, discord, and strife. But there was a peculiar motive in the case of the Jews, who had conquered the land in spite of them all, and whose religion was with others as it were a trumpet of war. And there were many that harboured a perverse jealousy; as the Edomites, whose minds were puffed up by reason of their circumcision, as if they also worshipped the God of Abraham. But it was a greater displeasure to be made subject to the reproaches of such as hated them for their true service of God. The faithful amplify the grievousness of the mischief by another circumstance; namely, that these reproaches are forced upon them on all sides; for they were beset round about with enemies so that they would not have had one minute's rest from trouble, except God had wonderfully defended them. They proceed yet further; that they were a by-word even among the nations that were far off. Although the word משל, which they translate a *proverb* or *by-word,* may be taken as well for a sore curse, as for a scoff, yet the meaning will be the same; namely, that there was no people under heaven more abhorred; insomuch that the name of them was bandied about in proverbial allusions as a term of reproach. The wagging and nodding of the head, whereof we have spoken in Psalm xxii. 8, refers to this also. And no doubt the faithful perceived the vengeance of God whereof there was mention made in the law, to be fulfilled in themselves. For that they might the more effectually awaken themselves to consider God's judgments, they had a care to compare the punishments that God executed upon them with his threatenings. Now the law had beforehand, told word for word, these mockings of the heathen which they make mention of. And when he says *among the heathen and among nations,* it is a repetition full of force, because it was in nowise seemly that the heathen nations should tear the elect people of God with their railings. Moreover, that they complained not without cause, even that one place of Cicero's in his Oration for Flaccus evidently attests, where that heathen rhetorician, with his accustomed pride, insults God no less than the Jews, avouching it to be certain enough that the Jews were

a nation hated of the gods because they had been afflicted from time to time with so many misfortunes, and in the end oppressed with most miserable bondage.

16 My confusion is daily before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me over.

17 At the voice of the upbraider, and the railer, at the face of the adversary and revenger.

18 All this is come upon us; and yet have we not forgotten thee, nor dealt falsely in thy covenant.

19 Our heart is not turned back, neither are our footsteps gone aside from thy path;

20 Although thou have smitten us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death.

21 If we have forgotten the name of our God, and have held up our hands to a strange god:

22 Shall not God search it out? For he knoweth the secrets of the heart.

16 *My confusion is daily, &c.*] כל היום signifies *a long continuance;* but it may be taken for the whole or entire day from morning to evening, or for the continued return of days. Which of these expositions soever you choose, the effect is, that there is no end of their miseries. Whereas the number is changed again, it is not at all against reason for the language of a whole church to be uttered as it were in the person of one man. Afterwards follows the cause why they were so overwhelmed with shame that they durst not lift up their countenance or their eyes; namely, because they had no respite given them from the insolence and revilings of their enemies. For if they might have had leave to hide themselves in corners, they would, as well as they could have gulped down their miseries. But their wound was doubled when their enemies scoffed unfeelingly at them. Therefore they lament that this crowning misery is put upon them, that they must be fain to hear revilings and blasphemies continually. And they call their enemies revengers; by which term the Hebrews denote fierceness and cruelty, joined with scornfulness, according as we have said in Psalm xix.

18 *All this is come upon us, &c.*] Seeing they have before ascribed to God whatsoever misfortune they endured, if they should now say they were afflicted undeservedly, they would accuse God of unrighteousness; and so, consequently,

it would be no holy prayer, but rather an impious blasphemy. But it is to be noted, that although the faithful perceive no evident causes of their adversities, yet they abide fast by this principle, that God is surely led by good reason to handle them so roughly and hardly. Nevertheless, it is worth while to note at the same time, that they speak not here of the time past, but rather avouch their patient endurance, which was no small token of godliness in obediently submitting their neck to God's yoke. For we see how the greater part kick at God like wild horses, fretting against him, and raging with the stubbornness of maniacs. Wherefore that man has not a little profited in the fear of God, who, in afflictions, bridles himself by godly restraint that he be not carried out of the way by any impatience. For it is an easy matter even for hypocrites to bless God in prosperity; but they burst forth into rage if he shew himself strict towards them. The faithful then avouch that although they might have been driven from their right course by so many miseries, yet they never forgat God, but always worshipped him, although he were not altogether so favourable and merciful. Therefore they proclaim not their merits in times past, but only allege that even in the midst of afflictions they kept the covenant of God steadfastly. And indeed it is certain enough, that long before Antiochus persecuted them, the people abounded with corruptions which provoked God's vengeance; so that the soundness which is commended here, ought not to have been boasted of on their part. True it is, as we shall see soon after, that God bare with them, so that they were afflicted rather for his name's sake, than for their own offences; but yet this forbearance of God's should not have caused them to exempt themselves from guiltiness. Therefore it is to be considered that they do nothing now but shew forth their patience, in that, amidst such grievous and hard temptations, they had not shrunk from the service of God. And first they deny that they forgat God. For adversity does after a sort overcast the heaven, so that the remembrance of God may soon slip from us as though we were set far away from him. They add that they were not false or traitorous in his covenant. For, as I said, the wickedness of men is then most disclosed when they are enforced against their convictions. Thirdly, they say their heart was not turned back. And lastly, that their footsteps went not aside out of God's path. For as God allureth us daily, so must our hearts be always ready at his calling. Hence follows the direction of our ways: because we witness by our outward works, and by all our whole life, that our heart is unfeignedly devoted to God.

Whereas I have translated it, *our footsteps are not gone aside*, there is also another allowable translation alleged by some, *thou hast made our footing to slide.* For both the word תמ may be taken transitively, and also there is no negation put in. Albeit, as touching the sense, I dissent from them because they compare this place with that of Isaiah lxiii. 17; *Wherefore hast thou made us to stray that we should not walk in thy ways?* For the complaint tends rather to this purpose, that forasmuch as God had withdrawn his hand from them, they wandered wretchedly in by-ways. For God's paths have not always relation to his doctrine, but sometimes to prosperous and desirable successes.

20 *Although thou have smitten us, &c.*] The causal particle כי must be resolved either into the adversative particle, or into an adverb of time. For these next three verses are connected, and the sentence remains incomplete to this close; *For he knoweth the secrets of the heart.* They repeat in many words what we have seen before; namely, that though they were plunged into the depth of miseries, yet they stood upright in their place. Moreover, if we weigh the distresses to which they were brought, it will not seem to us to be hyperbolical when they say they were smitten into the bottomless pit. For by *the place of dragons*, I understand not deserts and solitudes, but the deepest gulfs of the sea. And therefore, I rather interpret תנים, *whales*, as it is taken in many other places. And this exposition is confirmed by the latter member, where they complain that they were overwhelmed with the shadow of death, which imports as much as that they were swallowed up of death itself. Now we must understand that in these words the Holy Ghost dictates to us a form of prayer, and therefore is enjoined us an invincible courage, such as may sustain us under the burden of all miseries, so that we may truly avouch, that even in the extremity of despair we trusted in God, and no temptations could banish the fear of God from our hearts; and finally, that we could by no weight of afflictions be so dismayed, that we had not always an eye to him. But it is worth while for us to mark more nearly the expressions which they use. For that they may shew that they retained the pure service of God, they avouch themselves not to have lifted up either heart or hand, save only to the one God of Israel. For it had not been enough for them to have conceived in themselves some confused notion of the godhead, unless true religion had flourished among them. For even they that murmur against God, although they are compelled

to acknowledge some manner of godhead, yet forge a god to themselves after their own caprice. And this is an artifice of the devil's, when he cannot at once eradicate all feeling of religion out of our hearts, to batter our minds with these engines, that we must seek another God, or that the God whom we have hitherto served must be appeased after another manner, or else that the assurance of his favour must be sought elsewhere than out of the law and the gospel. Forasmuch then as among the tossings and waves of adversities it is too hard a matter for us to continue firmly settled in pure faith, this protestation must be observed, that the holy fathers being distressed with all kind of miseries did nevertheless not cease to lean upon the true God. Which they express more clearly afterwards in the context, saying, *we stretch not out our hands, &c.* By which words they intimate, that they were contented with the one God, and had not their hope divided on different objects, nor gazed about to seek other succours. Whence we gather, that as many as have their minds roving after sundry hopes, forget the true God, to whom we yield not his due honour, except we rest upon him alone. And truly in the due worshipping of him, faith obtains the first place, and, which springs therefrom, calling upon him. For God is abridged of the chief part of his honour, when we seek even the smallest portion of our welfare without him. Then let us bear in mind that the true trial of godliness is when, being cast into the bottomless pits, we direct our eyes, our hope, and hearts, unto God alone. Whereby the impiety of popery is shewn, when, after they have confessed themselves to believe in the one God with their lips, they degrade his glory by giving it to his creatures. For although they excuse themselves in resorting to Christopher, and other saints of their own making, to find favour in God's sight by their patronage, yet is it certain that there is no difference in the form of invocation. Again, although we should admit that which they say, yet is it but a frivolous defence to seek advocates for themselves: for in so doing, Christ is not sufficient for them, yea rather his office is wholly lost sight of with them. The circumstance of this place is to be marked advisedly: for the faithful deny that they have held up their hands to strange gods, because it is too common a vice, if continued adversity oppress us, to set God aside, and to seek for other remedies. As long as God fondleth us gently and indulgently, we resort unto him; but if any adversity happen, soon we begin to doubt. And if we be pressed still further, or if there be no end of our miseries, the very con-

tinuance stirs us to despair; despair generates foolish objects of trust, and hence springs the forgery of new gods. Of the lifting up of hands we have spoken elsewhere.

22 Shall not God search it out? &c.] It is a solemn and serious protestation, when they dare make God judge of their soundness. Whereby it is manifest that they pleaded not their cause before the world, but communed with themselves as it had been at the judgment-seat of God; yea, and they add with greater boldness, that nothing is hidden from God. For whence comes it that hypocrites frequently call God to witness, but that while they throw a specious covering over their iniquity, they think themselves to have escaped from God's judgment, and change the character of God, as if they could dazzle his eyes with their deceptions. Therefore, as often as we come into God's sight, let the remembrance of this come also to our mind, that as he is the searcher of men's hearts, there is no good to be done with him by vain pretences.

23 Surely, for thy sake are we daily slain, and are accounted as sheep appointed to the slaughter.

24 Up, why sleepest thou, O Lord? awake, *and* forget us not for ever.

25 Why hidest thou thy face? wilt thou forget our misery and our affliction.

26 Because our soul is smitten down to the dust; our belly cleaveth to the dust.

27 Rise up to our rescue, and ransom us, for thy mercy's sake.

23 Surely, for thy sake, &c.] The faithful seek to win God's mercy in another respect; namely, because they are not punished for their own misdeeds, but because the unbelievers are set against them only for God's name sake. Truly at first sight it seems a foolish complaint. For it was a more seemly answer which Socrates made in chiding his wife, when he said it was better for him to perish guiltless than for his own fault: yea, and the comfort which Christ sets forth in Matt. v. 10, seems to differ far from these words, *Blessed are they that suffer persecution for righteousness' sake.* Also Peter, *If any man suffer for the name of Christ, it is rather a cause of joy and gladness*, 1 Ep. iv. 13, 14. I answer, that although it be the best comfort of sorrow to have our cause joined with Christ's, yet is it neither in vain nor amiss for the faithful to lay before God that they are unworthily

persecuted for his sake, to the intent he may set himself more vigorously in their defence. For it is right that he should have regard of his own glory, against which the wicked vaunt themselves when they insolently persecute his worshippers. And hereby it appears more clearly, that this Psalm was made when the people languished in captivity, or else when Antiochus wasted the church, because religion was then a cause of persecution. For the constancy of the people made the Babylonians furious, when they saw their superstitions condemned by those whom they had conquered and routed in battle; and the rage of Antiochus was wholly bent to quench the name of God. This also increases the grief, that God so little bridles the outrage of the ungodly, that they run forward continually in their cruelty with loose reins. Therefore they say *they are slain daily*, and also that there is no better account made of them than of *sheep appointed to the slaughter*. However, it is suitable here to call to mind what I touched upon erewhile; namely, that they were not so clear from all offence but that God might justly lay punishment upon them for their sins. But of his incomparable lovingkindness, he burieth our sins, and putteth us to wrongful persecutions, that we may be the more ready to glory that we bear the cross with Christ, and thereby become fellows and partakers of his glorious resurrection. We have told you that the rage of their enemies was for none other cause so sorely kindled as that the people would not revolt from the law, and cast away the true worship of God. Now must the doctrine be applied to our use: and, first, this is to be considered, that according to the example of the fathers, the afflictions wherewith the profession of our faith is to be ratified must be borne patiently: and, secondly, that even in the deepest darkness of death we must steadfastly call upon the name of God and continue in his fear. But Paul proceeds yet further, Rom. viii. 23, not only citing this for an example, but also avouching that the condition of the church in all time is here portrayed. Thus, then, we ought to resolve that the continual warfare of bearing the cross is enjoined us by God's appointment; and yet it is true that sometimes there is a truce or respite given us, because God spares our infirmity. And although swords are not always drawn against us, yet because we are the members of Christ, it behoves us to be ready to bear the cross with him. Therefore, lest the bitterness of the cross may make us afraid, we must always have this state of the church before our eyes, that as we are adopted in Christ, we are appointed to the slaughter. Otherwise the same will happen to us which we see happen to many apostates.

For as, in their judgment, it is too severe and wretched a state to die continually while they live, to be made a laughingstock, and not to have one minute free from fear; to rid themselves of that necessity, they shamefully forsake and deny Christ. Therefore that weariness or dread of the cross separate us not from godliness, let us always think upon this, that we must drink of the cup which God offereth us, and that he cannot be a Christian man who offers not himself in sacrifice to God.

24 *Up, why sleepest thou?*] Now the saints desire God at length to pity them, and to send them help and remedy. Although God bear with this babbling of the saints in their praying, when they desire him to rise up or to awake, yet it behoves them to be persuaded for a certainty that he keepeth watch for their welfare. For we may not imagine him to be Epicurus's god, that delights himself in idleness and pleasure. But because by reason of the dulness of our nature we conceive not at once the care that he hath of us, the faithful request him to shew in very deed that he is neither forgetful nor slothful. We must indeed firmly believe that God regardeth us, although he make as though he did not. Notwithstanding, because this belief is of faith and not of the flesh, that contrary sense which they conceive from the aspect of visible things, they lay familiarly in the lap of God, and by that means cast the corrupt affections out of their minds, in order that pure and unmixed faith may appear. If any one except that by this means prayer (than which nothing is more holy) is defiled, when the froward imagination of the flesh is mingled with it, I confess it to be so indeed: but when we use this liberty which the Lord permitteth, we must understand that he of his tender love wipeth away this fault, so that it defiles not our prayers.

26 *Because our soul is smitten, &c.*] Again they bewail the grievousness of their miseries, and report that they are afflicted beyond ordinary, that God should be the forwarder to help them. For by this metaphor they mean not only that they are cast down, but also that they are crushed and held down, so that they are not able to rise again. Some take the word *soul* for the *body*, so that it should be a repetition of the same sentence. But I like better that it should be taken for the part wherein life consists; as if they had said, they are cast down to the earth, and lie prostrate without any hope of getting up again. Here to their complaint they add a prayer, that God *should rise up to their rescue;* meanwhile by the word *ransom* they mean that they desire not a common kind of help, because they cannot be

saved otherwise than by ransoming. And yet no doubt their minds were thinking of the great *ransom* which sends forth its streams when God ransometh and delivereth us daily by sundry means. Although they boasted just now after a godly sort of the steadfastness of their faith, yet that it may be seen that they boasted not of their merits, they claim not here any recompense, but are contented with God's free goodness as the cause of their salvation.

PSALM XLV.

Solomon's grace and comeliness, his virtues in ruling the kingdom, his puissance and his riches, are described in terms of high commendation in this Psalm. And forasmuch as he had taken a stranger to wife out of Egypt, God promiseth to bless this marriage, if the new bride, bidding adieu to the love of her own nation, set her heart wholly upon her husband. In the meantime no doubt that under this image the majesty, wealth, and diffusion of Christ's kingdom are adorned with their proper titles, that the faithful may know that there is nothing more blessed or more to be desired, than to be under the governance of this most excellent king.

[*To the chief chanter upon the lilies of the sons of Korah. A Song of love to instruct.*]

As it is certain that this Psalm was made upon Solomon, so is it uncertain who is the author of it. It seems likely to me, that some one of the prophets, or godly teachers, (either after Solomon's death, or while he was yet alive,) took this matter as his subject, to shew that whatsoever had been seen in Solomon had a higher application. Moreover it is called a song of love, not because he commends God's fatherly love in the benefits wherewith Solomon was adorned, as some suppose; but because it contains a rejoicing for his prosperous and happy marriage, and so the genitive *of love* shall stand for an adjective, that it may be *a love song*. Indeed Solomon was called ידידיה, as it were, *beloved of the Lord*, 2 Sam. xii. 25. But the context, in my judgment, requires that ידידות should be referred to the mutual love wherewith married couples ought to embrace one another. But as love sometimes takes an unhappy turn, yea and even conjugal affection is never so well ordered but that there is some irregularity of the flesh mingled with it, therefore the song is at the same time called משכיל, that we may know that here the subject is not obscene or unchaste love; but that under the figure of Solomon is set forth to us the holy

and divine union of Christ and his church. The remaining portion of the title is wrested to various meanings by interpreters. שושן signifies properly *a lily*, and the sixtieth Psalm is entitled *A lily*, by the singular number. But here and in the eightieth Psalm there is put the plural number *lilies*: wherefore it should seem it was either the beginning of some common ballad, or else some instrument of music. As for me, I suspend my opinion, as in a matter of no great importance, because the sense will not suffer whichever interpretation I may choose to follow.

2 My heart is boiling over with a good word. The works that I indite shall be of the King; my tongue is the pen of a swift writer.

3 Thou art much fairer than the sons of men; grace is shed forth in thy lips: therefore hath God blessed thee for ever.

4 Gird thee with thy sword upon thy thigh, O thou Mighty, in beauty and glory.

5 Good luck have thou with thy worship: thou ridest upon the word of truth, meekness, and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.

6 Thine arrows are sharp to pierce into the hearts of the King's enemies; that nations may fall under thee.

2 *My heart is boiling.*] This preface shews sufficiently that the subject of this Psalm is no common matter. For whosoever was the author of it, he promises to treat of great and glorious things. And seeing that the Holy Ghost is not wont to distend the cheeks with wind so that they should pour forth empty sounds, we may gather that he not only treats here of a transitory kingdom, but also discusses some more excellent thing. For to what purpose serves so stately a style, as that the prophet's heart should boil over, to bestow his labour and pains in setting forth the king's praises? Now although others like better the word *utter*, yet the other signification of the verb seems to agree better, which is proved by the noun that is derived from the same verb, that is, כור חשת, which is a *frying-pan*, wherein sweetmeats are fried, a word which is to be met with once or twice in Moses; as if he had said, that his heart was breathing some memorable and excellent matter. Afterwards he declares the consent of his heart and his

tongue, when he likens his tongue to the pen of a swift and ready writer. And he begins with the commendation of his beauty, and afterwards adds the praise of eloquence. Moreover, the perfection of beauty is commended in the king, not because fairness of face ought to be highly esteemed of itself, since it has no place among the virtues; but because oftentimes a noble disposition shines forth in the very countenance of a man, as it is possible that Solomon, by his countenance alone, shewed that he was endowed with excellent gifts. And not without cause is eloquence commended in a king, considering that it belongs to him not only to rule the people with authority, but also to allure them to obedience by grace of speech; even as men of old time feigned that there were golden chains in Hercules' mouth, wherewith he drew the common sort of people by the ears. And hereby is reproved the mean spirit of kings in our days, who think it stands not with the honour of their estate to employ language to their subjects to win them to submission. Nay, rather they bewray their barbarous tyranny, in that their purpose is rather to compel them than to persuade them; and to abuse them rather as slaves, than to govern them with justice and laws, as tractable and obedient people. Howbeit, as this accomplishment was seen in Solomon, so did it shine forth more fully afterwards in Christ, to whom doctrine was instead of a sceptre, as will be shewn at large by and by. The portion עַל־כֵּן is not put here by way of inference, as though Solomon were blessed for the attractions of beauty and eloquence; for both of these are the blessings of God. But rather it is a rendering of the cause why Solomon excelled in these gifts; namely, because God had blessed him. For whereas some expound it, God shall bless thee for thine excellency, it is flat and constrained.

4 *Gird thy sword, &c.*] Here Solomon is praised as well for his warlike valour, which strikes fear into his enemies, as for his virtues, which win him reverence among his subjects. For neither can a king maintain and defend his people, unless he be formidable to his enemies; and it will be to small purpose to war boldly upon foreign realms, except the inward state of his kingdom be settled in uprightness and justice. First, therefore, he says that the sword wherewith he shall be girded shall be a token of warlike force to put his enemies to flight; and secondly, also of power, that he should not be held in contempt among his own subjects. At the same time he adds, that the glory wherewith he shall flourish shall not be transient, like the empty pride of kings, which soon decays, but shall

have prosperous and long continuing speed. Secondly, he comes down to his virtues, that shine forth best in a peaceable and quiet state, which he shews, by a select metaphor, to be the true support of a kingdom. It seems at first sight to be an inelegant expression to say, *he rideth upon truth, meekness, and righteousness;* but, as I have said, he likens these virtues most aptly to chariots, that carry kings aloft, and sets them not only against the vain pomps wherein earthly kings vaunt themselves, but also against their vices and corruptions, with which most commonly they go about to purchase themselves estimation. Solomon himself, in his Proverbs, says, that *a king's throne is established by justice and mercy.* But when worldly kings desire to enlarge and fortify their dominions, their horses and chariots are ambition, pride, fierceness, cruelty, exactions, rapine, and violence, and therefore it is no marvel though God oftentimes tumble them down from their tottering and decayed thrones. This, therefore, is the true and solid foundation of kingdoms, to cultivate faithfulness and justice, and to temper the government with mercy. The latter member warns us, that whatsoever Solomon attempts shall issue prosperously if he combine with warlike courage the blended qualities of justice and mercy. For, as for such kings as are carried away with blind and heady violence, although they fill all things with fear and consternation for a moment, yet soon do they sink under the force of their own efforts. It is therefore a due and uniform self-restraint that makes the hands of the valiant to be feared. In the next verse he returns to warlike power, when he says that the king's arrows shall be sharp to pierce the hearts of his enemies. By which words he means that he hath weapons in his hand wherewith to strike his enemies afar off, whosoever they be that withstand his sovereignty. In which sense also he says, that nations shall be cast down under him; as if he shoud say, Whosoever they be that dare rise up to shake the stability of his kingdom, they shall miserably perish; because there shall be power enough in the hand of the king to break their stubbornness.

7 Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

8 Thou lovest righteousness and hatest ungodliness; therefore hath God, even thy God, anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

7 *Thy throne, O God, &c.*] He commends other princely virtues in Solomon; namely, that his throne is everlasting,

and also that the system of his government is just and rightful. For the Jews misinterpret this place most abominably, as though the words were spoken unto God: others read אלהים in the genitive case, thus *the throne of thy God;* but this is absurd, and betrays their shamelessness, in that they hesitate not to mangle the scripture so foully, rather than be constrained to acknowledge the Godhead of the Messiah. But the simple and natural sense is, that Solomon reigns not tyrant-like, as many kings do, but with rightful and indifferent laws, and therefore his throne shall be steadfast for ever. Now although he be called God, because God hath imprinted some mark of his glory in kings, yet could not this style be verified of a mortal man, because we read nowhere that any man or angel was adorned with this title without another addition. Truly in the plural number as well angels as judges are termed gods, but no one person is called אלהים, without addition of some restriction, as when Moses is appointed to be Pharaoh's god, Exod vii. 1; whence we may gather, that this Psalm has a sublimer application than the shadowy kingdom, as we shall see soon. In the next verse is put a clearer definition of uprightness; that is, that he is a no less severe punisher of wickedness, than a maintainer of righteousness. For we know what mischiefs are engendered by impunity and license, when kings are negligent and slack in punishing wicked deeds. Whence comes that old by-word that it is worse to live under a prince under whom all things are lawful, than under whom nothing is lawful. Also the sentence of Solomon, Prov. xvii. 15, is known; *He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the righteous, are both abominable to God.* Therefore rightful government consists of these two parts; namely, that those in authority do straitly restrain evil deeds, and stoutly maintain righteousness; as it is well and wisely said by Plato, that civil order consists of two parts, that is, of rewarding and punishing, when he adds that he was *anointed above his fellows.* It is not set down as the effect or fruit of righteousness, but rather as the cause of it. For hence came it that Solomon's mind was bent to uprightness and justice, because he was set over the people to be their king by the appointment of God. For God, ordaining him to this honour of sovereignty, did therewith furnish him with needful gifts. Therefore the portion על־כן again in this place imports as much as *because*; as if he should say, It is no marvel though Solomon be so notable an observer of justice, seeing he is chosen out of the number of his brethren, to be adopted king by holy anointing. For before he was born he was appointed to be successor of the kingdom by answer from heaven, and

after he was set upon the throne he was also adorned with princely virtues. Whence it follows that anointing was in order before righteousness, and so righteousness cannot be accounted the cause of it. It is termed the *oil of gladness* by reason of the effect of it, because the felicity and welfare of the church depended upon that kingdom.

Hitherto I have expounded the literal sense, now must I handle somewhat more at large the comparison of Solomon with Christ, which I have touched on cursorily. Although godly and modest men will be satisfied with that which is known by the often use of the scripture; namely, that the image of Christ was represented to the people of old time, in the posterity of David, yet because the Jews and other heathenish persons will not easily yield to the truth, it is worth while to shew briefly by the very context itself, how part of the things which are spoken here, agree not fully and perfectly with Solomon. But, as I told you at the first, the prophet's meaning was, to call back godly minds from the alarm which the sorrowful alteration that happened awhile after, might strike into them. There was promised an everlastingness of the kingdom which decayed as soon as that one man Solomon was dead. The prophet therefore makes exception, that although Rehoboam, who was the first successor of that glorious and puissant kingdom, was reduced within narrow bounds, by having a great part of the realm cut off from him, yet there was no reason why the faith of the church should quail, because the figure of the everlasting kingdom which was still to be hoped for, was exhibited there. And first of all the name of king is given to Solomon in way of excellency, that we should understand that he speaks not of every manner of king, but of that notable king whose throne God had promised should endure as long as the sun and the moon shine in the sky, Psalm lxxii. 5. Surely, David was a king, and so were they that followed afterwards. There is then in this term a special designation given, as though the Holy Ghost should choose out this one man from all the rest to place him in the highest room. But how can it agree, that warlike valour should be so greatly commended in Solomon, who both was of a meek disposition, and also having obtained a quiet state, followed only the arts of peace, and never gave any proof of himself in battle? Surely nothing can be alleged more evident than this testimony wherein the everlastingness of the kingdom is avouched. Nor can there be any doubt that the oracle can be referred to, whereof I spake even now; that the throne of David should continue as long as the sun and the moon endure in the sky, Psalm lxxii. 5. But even the Jews themselves are constrained to

refer this to the Messiah. Therefore, although the prophet began his treatise upon the son of David, yet he mounted up higher in spirit, and comprehended the kingdom of the true and everlasting Messiah. To this is added the name אלהים, which though it be commonly referred both to angels and men, yet it agrees not simply with any one man alone. And therefore no doubt the divine majesty of Christ is expressly denoted here. Now come I down to the several parts, which notwithstanding I will but lightly run over. We have said that it was called a *love song* or a *wedding song*, in suchwise that holy instruction may obtain the first place, lest we should imagine any wanton or earthly love. In the same sense must we understand that Christ is called *beautiful*, not that he was so goodly to behold for the beauty of his countenance, as dull men dream, but because he was endued with singular gifts, wherein he far transcends all men. Nor is it novel for that which is spiritual in Christ, to be described under earthly figures. Christ's kingdom is said to be puissant, to which is added glorious state, such as is seen in abundant prosperity and great power: and unto that also are joined pleasures, ad yet none of these agree with Christ's kingdom, which is a stranger to the pomps of the world. But forasmuch as the prophets minded to apply their doctrine to the capacity of the people, they spake no otherwise of Solomon than of the service of God, which they shadow under the ceremonies of the law. If we bear this analogy in mind there remains no obscurity in this place. Moreover, that the heavenly king, after he is praised for his eloquence, is also armed with the sword, is worth remarking. For as eloquence of speech governs such as are willing and teachable, even so because there have been many rebellious and unruly persons in all ages, and shall be still, it must needs be that all unbelievers should feel, by their own destruction, that Christ is not come unarmed. Therefore while he sweetly allureth us to him, let us with forward obedience receive his yoke, that he fall not upon us armed with sword and deadly arrows. Worthily indeed is grace said to be shed on his lips, because in his own nature he breatheth forth the Gospel, which is the odour of life. Nevertheless, if we are stiffnecked, this grace is turned into terribleness, and of his doctrine of salvation Christ shall make himself swords and arrows. Hereby is ministered unto us no small comfort, lest the multitude and pride of Christ's enemies might discourage us. We see how proudly the papists reject Christ, whom they boast to be their king; with heathenish contempt the greater part of the world make but a jest of him; and how frowardly also the Turks and Jews rail upon him.

Therefore in such confusion of things, let us bethink us of this prophecy, that he hath swords and arrows to overthrow and destroy his enemies. I will here briefly repeat that which I touched upon before; that howsoever the Jews strive to elude this verse with their cavils, *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*, yet is it of sufficient force to prove the everlasting Godhead of Christ, because whensoever the name אלהים is ascribed either to angels or men, there is always wont to be added to it some mark that puts a difference between them and the only true God, but here it is applied to Christ simply and without any qualification. Furthermore it is worth noting, that Christ is spoken of here so far forth as he was God manifested in the flesh. For although he is called God, because he is the Word, begotten of the Father before all worlds, yet he is set forth here in the character of Mediator, whence also a little after he is made subject to God. And surely if you restrain that to his divine nature which is spoken of his everlasting kingdom, we shall be bereft of the inestimable fruit which we reap from this doctrine; namely, that inasmuch as he is the head of the church and the preserver and guardian of our welfare, he reigneth not for a time, but enjoyeth an endless sovereignty, because hence we derive our great security as well in death as in life. Also it appears clearly by the text following, that Christ is set forth to us as our Mediator, because he is said to be anointed of his God, yea and that above his fellows. But this cannot agree with the eternal Word of God, but Christ clad with flesh, in which flesh he is both God's servant and our brother.

9 All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, from whence they made thee glad.

10 Kings' daughters were among thy honourable women: thy wife stood on thy right hand in gold of Ophir.

11 Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and bow down thine ear; and forget thine own people and thy father's house;

12 So shall the King have pleasure in thy beauty; for he is thy Lord, and thou shalt worship him.

13 And the daughter of Tyre with a gift; the rich people shall do homage before thy face.

9 *All thy garments smell, &c.*] I do not dispute solicitously about the words: for not even the Hebrews are agreed

among themselves, what the third word signifies, saving that from its likeness to the others it may be conjectured to be cassia. It is enough that the prophet says the king's garments are perfumed with precious and sweet-smelling odours. And he describes Solomon coming forth from an ivory palace, from whence all men hail him, clapping their hands for joy: for I translate not the particle מִנִּי *out of me*, because one can elicit no tolerable sense therefrom; but I refer it to *palaces*. Now although excess and superfluity of delights are not blameless, not only in the commonalty, but also even in kings; yet on the other hand, we must beware of too much austerity, that we condemn not utterly the moderate display which is answerable to their estate, even as soon after the queen is brought in sumptuously and royally apparelled. Meanwhile we must consider, that what is praised here in Solomon, was not all approved of God. And to omit other things, surely even from his first beginning, God was displeased with his marrying of so many wives. But concubines are put among the blessings of God; nor is it to be doubted, but that by the honourable women, the prophet means his wives, of whom mention is made in another place. For although his Egyptian wife were the chief of them, yet it appears that the residue, whom the holy history places in meaner degree, were entertained liberally and honourably; whom the prophet calls kings' daughters, because many of them were born of blood royal. How then does the prophet account it among the praises of Solomon, that he had many wives, which thing God disalloweth in all private persons, and in kings expressly? Surely, it is easy to gather that when the king's riches and glory are commended after an ordinary manner, the abuse of them is not approved, for it was not the prophet's purpose to match the example of a man, in contention with the rule of God. Indeed, the puissance, dignity, and glory of Solomon, were God's singular blessing; but such as he himself, according as it is wont to come to pass, defiled with many corruptions, while he observed no self-control, but abused his abundant plenty, to the excessive indulgence of his flesh. To be brief; here is declared how bountifully God poured abundance of all things upon Solomon. Now, that he took so many wives, and kept not a prudent mien in his pomp, is as it were accidental.

11 *Hearken, O daughter, &c.*] I doubt not he speaks of the Egyptian woman whom he mentioned just now, as standing at the right hand of the king. And although it was not lawful for Solomon to marry a strange woman, yet even this also is justly to be accounted among the gifts of

God, that a most puissant king sought his alliance. Now, since by the appointment of the law, the Jews were bound to endeavour to acquaint their wives with the pure worshipping of God, and to rid them of their superstitions before they matched with them, the prophet, calling back the heathen-born damsel, which by her new marriage was grafted into the body of the church, from her evil education up, bids her to put away the remembrance of her country, and of her father's house, and to put on another nature and other manners; for otherwise there was danger not only that she would privily keep to herself the false worshippings to which she had been habituated, but also by her public example draw many into the participation of her offence; which came afterwards to pass. This was the reason of his exhortation, in which, to win himself authority, he uses the name of *daughter*, which had been a folly in the person of any private man. And that it may the better appear how much it behoved the new bride to become altogether a new woman, he requires her to give heed to him with many words, saying, *Hearken, consider, and bow down thine ear.* For surely there needs vehemence and urgent persuasion, when we treat of the renunciation of all such things as we are wedded too, either by nature or custom. And he admonishes her, that there is no reason why Pharaoh's daughter should grieve to forsake her father, her kinsfolk, and all Egypt: because she should meet with a glorious recompense to allay regret at their absence. And therefore he bids her be contented, for she should match with such a husband as she might be glad to forbear her own country for. Now let us return to Christ: and let us remember first, that that which is spiritual in his kingdom, is described to us here in figures; like as, in consideration of the grossness of men, the prophets were compelled to borrow similitudes from earthly things. If we bear in mind this manner of speaking, which is rife in the scripture, we shall not wonder that the prophet speaks of ivory palaces, gold, precious stones, and spices: for it signifies that he shall be furnished with plentiful abundance of all good things. Now, although the gloriousness and dignity of the spiritual gifts with which God enricheth his church, are despised by the world, yet are they better in the sight of God, than all the riches of the world; although we need not to apply each several member curiously to Christ, of which sort that is, which is spoken of his many wives. For if there be imagined many churches, the unity of Christ's body shall be rent in pieces. True it is, that as each one of the faithful is called the temple of God, 1 Cor. iii. 17, so also they may after a manner be

called the spouse of Christ; but properly speaking, there is but one spouse, which is composed of the universal congregation of the godly. And she is said to sit by the king's side: not that she bears any sovereignty, but because Christ beareth the sovereignty in her; in which sense she is called the mother of us all. Gal. iv. 26. This place contains a notable prophecy of the calling of the Gentiles then to come; by which it came to pass that the Son of God formed an alliance with strangers, and with such as were his enemies. For there was between God and all uncircumcised people, a separation of enmity, and a wall set to make a difference between them and those that were the chosen of the stock of Abraham; because the covenant that God had made with Abraham, precluded the Gentiles from the kingdom of heaven, till the coming of Christ. Therefore, he vouchsafed to take the world in holy wedlock, just as if a Jew, in old time, had taken a wife from a foreign and heathen nation. Moreover, that the prophet may bring the bride chaste and undefiled unto Christ's presence, he exhorts the church which is gathered from the Gentiles to forget her former life, and to devote herself wholly to her husband. And because this change is difficult, whereby the children of Adam, beginning to become the children of God, are transformed into new men, the prophet exacts it the more earnestly. For by this throng of words, *Hearken, consider, bow down thine ear*, he signifies that the faithful do not throw off themselves, together with their former habits, without intense and painful effort; for unto those that be forward and willing, such exhortation were superfluous. And surely, experience shews how dull and slow we are to follow God. Furthermore, by the word *consider* our slothfulness is deservedly rebuked. For hence grows that blind self-love, and false conceit of our own wisdom and strength; the fascinations of the world, arrogance and pride; even because we consider not how precious a treasure God offereth us in his only-begotten Son. Were it not for this unthankfulness, it would not grieve us, after the example of Paul, Phil. iii. 8, to account whatsoever we set most store by to be but as dung or nought, that Christ might enrich us with his goods. Now as he gently and sweetly sooths his new church by calling her daughter, so also doth he allure her with reward, that for Christ's sake she may willingly despise and forsake whatsoever she made account of heretofore. For it is more than a common comfort, that we shall be dear above all things to the Son of God, as soon as we shall have put off our earthly nature. In the mean while let us learn, that the denying of ourselves is the beginning of our holy coupling

with Christ. For doubtless by her father's house, and by her people, the prophet means all manner of corruptness which we bring from our mother's womb, or which we drink in by evil custom. Or rather under this kind of speech he comprehends whatsoever men have of themselves; because no part of nature is sound, or free from corruption. Also the reason that is added is to be noted, that the church shakes off her due and lawful subjection unless she give herself wholly unto Christ. For by the word *worship*, not only the outward ceremony, but also the godly affection of reverence and rendering obedience is denoted by the figure synecdoche. And would God this warning had been thoroughly weighed as it ought to be; for then had Christ's church been more obedient to his command, and we should not in these days have so great contention about the authority of it against the papists, who think that the church is not honourably enough dealt with, unless she may exult over her husband with unbridled liberty. For although they grant the sovereignty to Christ in words; that all knees should bow before him; yet considering that they claim unlimited power for the church in making laws, what else is it but to throw off the rein, that she may run riot without measure? I omit how wickedly they arrogate to themselves the title of 'the church.' But it is an intolerable treason to rob Christ, to deck herself withal. Truly, it is no small dignity to sit at the king's right hand, as also it is no small honour to be accounted the mother of all the godly, to hold them in awe under her. But it is easy to gather from innumerable texts of scripture, that Christ doth not in anywise so advance his church that he diminisheth or impeacheth any part of his own right.

13 *And the daughter of Tyre, &c.*] This is a part of the recompense wherewith the prophet mitigates or rather extinguishes longing after her former state; that the Tyrians shall come with presents. We know how renowned the fame of Tyre has been in old time; and therefore he puts it as the highest honour, that they shall come out of so noble and wealthy a city to make submission to her. And although it be not needful to go through with every small member, that we may find all those things in the church which are spoken here of Solomon's wife; yet we taste some fruit of this prophecy at this day, when God maketh some great men of the world foster and maintain the church with their courtesy, although they themselves receive not the yoke of Christ.

14 The King's daughter is altogether glorious within; her raiment is of cloth of tissue.

15 She shall be brought to the King in raiment of needle-work: her maidens that are next about her shall be brought unto thee.

16 They shall be brought with joy and gladness: and they shall enter into the King's palace.

17 Thy children shall be instead of thy fathers, thou shalt make them princes through the whole earth.

18 I will make thy name renowned throughout all generations: therefore shall the nations magnify thee for ever, world without end.

14 *The king's daughter, &c.*] There may be a twofold interpretation of this verse; namely, either that the queen is always sumptuously apparelled, not only when she comes abroad into the face of the world, but also when she sits in her chamber, or else that the gorgeousness of her attire is not counterfeit, to dazzle the eyes of the simple, but was made of substantial and rich stuff. The prophet therefore amplifies the happy state of the queen by this circumstance, that she has sumptuous apparel, not only to shew herself in now and then, but also to attire herself in daily. Others expound it that all her gloriousness consists in this, that the king takes her familiarly into his company; because soon after, her passing by into her chamber is described to be with a great and gorgeous train following her. Now although this pomp exceed measure, yet the prophet teaches by the way, that the church is not so sumptuously apparelled that she should make the people stand gazing at her, but only to please the king. And that the church at this day glitters not with spiritual beauty, wherein the riches of Christ may shine forth, is to be imputed to the unthankfulness of men who, through their own slothfulness, either refuse God's liberality, or else after they are enriched are brought again to poverty.

17 *Thy children shall be, &c.*] This also furthers the excellence of his kingdom, that the posterity shall not be inferior to their forefathers in worthiness, and so the nobility of the race shall not be diminished after the death of Solomon; because the offspring that shall come from him, shall equal their forefathers in all excellence of virtue. Afterwards he adds, *that they shall be princes through the whole earth*, with dominion so far spread abroad that it might easily be

divided into many kingdoms. Surely it is easy to be gathered that this prophecy concerns Christ. For Solomon's sons were so far off from having so large a kingdom as to divide provinces among them, that his first heir retained but a small portion only. And so none of his lawful successors attained to be so puissant as he, but all of them were as it were pent up in a strait within the lordship of one tribe and a half. But when it came to Christ, who stood between the old church and the new, he indeed begat children that yielded not to their fathers, either in number or in excellence, whom he set as rulers over the whole world. For although the unseemliness of the cross darken the glory of the church before the world; yet if we consider how wonderfully it has been increased, and with what gifts of spiritual virtues it has been garnished, we must confess that it is not without cause that the glory thereof is renowned. However, it should be noted that the princedom whereof mention is made, consists not in the persons of men, but is referred to the head. For the dominion and power which properly belong to the head, and apply peculiarly to Christ alone, are commonly imputed to his members. For we know that those who have chief pre-eminence in the church take not upon them as lords under the name of Christ, but rather are as handservants; but as Christ hath intrusted them with his gospel, which is the sceptre of his kingdom, they, after a sort, exercise his power. Surely Christ hath subdued the world to him by his ministers, and hath set as many dominions as there have been churches gathered to him in diverse nations.

18 *I will make thy name renowned, &c.*] Not a bit more does this agree with Solomon, who by his shameful and impious defection, did foully stain the renown of his name; for seeing that he by the filthiness of his superstitions, defiled the land that was hallowed unto God, did he not bespot himself with endless shame and reproach? Surely he deserved to have had his name buried in everlasting forgetfulness: not a whit more glory earned Rehoboam, who lost the best part of his kingdom through his own doltish pride. Therefore that the truth of his title may be assured, we must needs pass to Christ, whose renown lives and flourishes evermore; for although the world despise him, or rather the proud either wound or reproachfully dishonour his sacred name, yet the majesty of it remains undiminished. Although enemies without number rise up on all sides to oppress his kingdom, yet all knees begin to bow before him until he have cast all the powers that are against him under his feet. For the furious attempts of Satan and the whole world

could not quench the name of Christ, but that it was handed down to them that came after, and holds still its glory from age to age, like as we see it to be celebrated by all tongues even at this day. Now although the greater part of the world rend it with impious blasphemies, yet is it enough that God doth everywhere stir up preachers to sound forth the praises of Christ with unfeigned zeal. In the meantime, it is our duty to exert ourselves to the uttermost, that this renown decay not at any time, which must continue and flourish through all ages to the eternal salvation of men.

PSALM XLVI.

It seems to be a thanksgiving rather for some certain deliverance than for God's continual help wherewithal he hath always defended the state of the church. For it may be gathered that Jerusalem was beyond expectation preserved by the sudden and wonderful working of God, at what time it was put to great fear, and laboured under extreme danger. Therefore the prophet, whosoever was the author of the Psalm, commending so singular a benefit of God, exhorts the faithful to commit themselves to his protection fearlessly, and not to doubt but that relying upon him as their guardian, and the avenger of their safety, they shall be evermore secured against all assaults of their enemies, because it is his peculiar office to appease all commotions.

[*To the chief of the sons of Korah. A Song upon Alamoth.*]

2 God is our defence and strength, he is found greatly our help in tribulations.

3 Therefore will we not fear though the earth be moved, and though the mountains fall into the heart of the sea ;

Upon Alamoth.] The interpreters agree not about the word עלמות; nevertheless, omitting the greater part of the opinions, I will rehearse but two; either that it was an instrument of music, or else the beginning of some common and well-known song; and I like best this latter opinion. Moreover, it is uncertain at what time this Psalm was composed, except perhaps it was when the siege of the city was raised, when that sore slaughter was made in the host of Sennacherib by the hand of God, 2 Kings xix. 35; which I willingly admit, because it agrees very well with the whole narrative. It is undoubtedly manifest that some such

notable benefit of God as that was is commended in this place.

2 God is our defence, &c.] He begins with a general sentence before he comes to the specific deliverance. For he protests that there is sufficient strength in God to preserve his servants, and that he gives them due cause to hope so, for so signifies properly the word מחסה. In the second part of the verse, the word נמצא is of the time past, although it might, not unfitly, be restrained to the safety once given, as others also translated it, *he hath been found an help*. But because the prophet joins *tribulations* in the plural number, I have preferred to expound it of a continued act; namely, that God offereth himself in season as often as any afflictions distress us. Although if the prophet speak of the experiences of God's favour, the preter tense will suit the place better. The prophet's intent is to extol the goodness and power of God, and also his speedy help towards his servants, that in adversity they should not gaze about elsewhere, but content themselves with his protection alone. And therefore it is set down in express words that God is such a one towards his servants, that the church may perceive itself to be defended peculiarly by him. And there is no doubt but that by this saying he separates his elect people from strange and heathen nations, and so he commends the privilege of adoption which God vouchsafed to the offspring of Abraham. Therefore when I said it was a general sentence, I purposed not to extend it without exception to all manner of persons, but to all times; because he teaches no more than how God is wont to carry himself towards all those that are his. Afterwards ensues an inference that there is no cause of dismay in the faithful, seeing that God is always ready to deliver them, yea and always armed with invincible power. And the prophet shews which is the true and right trial of hope; that is to say, when things are so confused, that in a manner the heavens seem to fall, the earth to remove out of his place, and the mountains to be rent asunder from their roots, yet we stand steady with calm and quiet minds. For it is an easy matter to make a shew of great faith as long as no peril hangs over us; but if a general crash of the whole world assault our minds without disturbing their tranquillity, then it easily appears that we yield due honour to the power of God. Moreover, when he says *we shall not fear*, he does not utterly exempt godly minds from all solicitude or fear, as if they were devoid of feeling, for there is a great difference between insensibility and the constancy of faith; but he only shews that whatsoever betide, they are never overwhelmed with terror, but

rather gather strength sufficient to allay all fear. *The earth to move*, and *the mountains to fall into the heart of the sea*, are hyperbolical expressions, but yet such as signify the turning of the whole world upside down. For whereas some expound the heart of the sea to be the earth, I approve it not. But that we may see the full doctrine, let us proceed to the residue.

4 The waters thereof shall roar and be troubled: the mountains shall be shaken in the lifting up thereof. Selah.

5 The streams of her river shall make glad the city of God, even the sanctuary of the tabernacles of the Most Highest.

6 God is in the midst of it, therefore shall it not be moved: God shall help her at the sight of the morning.

4 *The waters thereof, &c.*] The latter verse must be joined with this, because it completes the sentence; as if he had said, Although the waters rage and swell, yea, and shake the very mountains with their violent rushing, yet shall the city of God take her rest comfortably and quietly, even in the midst of those horrible tumults, contenting herself with her small brooks. For the pronoun relative *her* is superfluous, according to the common custom of the Hebrew tongue. For the prophet meant to say no more than that the small streams of her brook should minister full occasion of gladness to the holy city, though peradventure the whole world be moved. I just mentioned a little before how profitable a lesson this place contains; namely, that our faith is then rightly tried when it comes to most grievous conflicts, insomuch that the very hills seem to be opened to swallow us up. So also is the victory of faith against the whole world portrayed to us; namely, when it comes forth out of the confusion in suchwise, that although all creatures menace destruction, yet it vanquishes all fear. Not that the children of God laugh in their perils, or scoff and jest at death; but because they make more account of the help promised by God, than of all the inconveniences that put them in fear. Horace's sentiment concerning the righteous man, and him that has a clear conscience, seems admirable—

> "Let the wild winds, that rule the sea
> Tempestuous, all their horrors raise;
> Let Jove's dread arm with thunders rend the spheres,
> Beneath the crush of worlds undaunted he appears."

But as the man that he speaks of could never be found, he does but trifle. The greatness of mind then, that I speak of, is founded upon the only defence of God, so that they who lean on God may truly make their boast that they shall not only be without fear, but also safe and sound when all the world falls in pieces. And the prophet says in express words that *the city of God shall be glad*, although it have no raging sea to set against those waves that he spoke of, but a small brook only, and alludes to that little stream which flowed out of Siloah and skirted Jerusalem. Moreover, I doubt not but that the prophet indirectly reproves the vain trust of such as dream themselves to be out of all reach of harm, because they are fenced with earthly helps. For they that anxiously seek to fortify themselves on all sides with the invincible helps of the world, seem indeed to be able to prevent their enemies from coming near them, as if they were environed on all sides with the sea; and yet it oftentimes happens that their own defences turn to their undoing, in like manner as if a tempest should waste and destroy an island by overflowing it. But they that commit themselves to the protection of God, although as to the world they are exposed to all wrongs, and are not sufficiently fenced to hold out against assaults, yet do they repose in security. In this respect Isaiah, viii. 6, reproves the Jews, because they despised the gently flowing waters of Siloah, and longed for deep and rapid rivers. There is in that passage an elegant antithesis between the little brook Siloah on the one part, and the Nile and Euphrates on the other; as if he should say, They defraud God of his honour, as though when he chose the city of Jerusalem he had not foreseen what helps should be required for the defence of it. And surely if this Psalm were made after the slaughter and flight of Sennacherib's host, it is likely that the author of it used the same metaphor advisedly, that the faithful might hereafter learn that the only grace of God is enough for them without the helps of the world. With the same earnestness also doth the Holy Spirit exhort and encourage us to this constancy at this day, that despising the hosts of them who vaunt themselves proudly against us, we should stand immoveable among all disquietudes and troubles, and not be grieved or ashamed of our nakedness, seeing that the hand of God is stretched out to save us. Therefore, although God's help trickle down but softly in appearance, as it were in little streams, yet it bringeth us more quietness than if all the power of the world were heaped together to help us. When he terms Jerusalem *the sanctuary of the tabernacles of the Most Highest*, it is a beautiful allusion to

the state of that time. For although God held sovereignty through every one of the tribes, yet he chose Jerusalem for his royal seat, from whence to rule all the realm. Therefore, although the tabernacles or tents of the Most Highest were divided through all Judah, yet must they be all gathered under one sanctuary, that they might be under God.

6 *God is in the midst of it, &c.*] Now he shews from whence that great security of the church comes; namely, because God sitteth in the midst of it. For the word *shall be moved* is of the feminine gender, and cannot be referred to God as though he should be immoveable, but the sentence must be resolved thus: The holy city shall not be moved from her state, because God sitteth in her, and is always ready to succour her. For the *sight of the morning* imports as much as if he had said, every day as soon as the sun rises upon the earth. The effect is, that if we desire to be protected by the hand of God, we must in anywise endeavour that he may dwell among us, because all hope of welfare depends upon his presence alone. And he dwelleth not among us for any other cause but to keep us in safety. Howbeit, although God help us not always in haste, according to the eagerness of our desires, yet will he be with us in due season, so that that may easily appear to be true which is spoken in another place; *That the keeper of the church neither sleeps nor slumbers at any time;* Ps. cxxi. 4.

7 The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved: he put forth his voice, and the earth melted.

8 The Lord of hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our strong hold. Selah.

9 Come, consider the works of the Lord: what wildernesses he hath made upon the earth.

10 He maketh battles to cease, even to the uttermost coasts of the earth: he breaketh the bow, scattereth the harness, and burneth up the chariots with fire.

11 Be still, and know ye that I am God: I will be exalted among the Gentiles; I will be exalted on earth.

12 The Lord of hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our strong-hold. Selah.

7 *The nations raged, &c.*] Because the church of God never wants enemies, and those exceedingly powerful, and

consequently such as assault it cruelly and with unbridled fury, the prophet now by experience confirms the doctrine which he set down concerning the impregnable protection of God, and afterwards deduces a general comfort; namely, that it is the continual charge of God to assuage all troubles, and to appease them; and that his hand is strong enough to break all the attempts of enemies. I confess this place might be taken indefinitely, that God's city is subject to many storms, and yet abides always safe by the benefit of God. But it is more likely, as I said at the beginning, that the narrative relates to some notable deliverance, wherein God had shewn some proof of his never-ending power and favour in preserving his church. The prophet therefore reports what had happened, that is, that the enemies of the church came with dreadful preparation to destroy it, and that they were soon as it were molten by the voice of God. And hereby redounds unto us an inestimable comfort, when we hear that although the whole world rise against us, and trouble all things with frantic heat, they may be brought to nought in a moment, as soon as God shall shew himself favourable to us. Now although God's voice betoken his command or beck, yet the prophet seems to allude to God's promises, by which he hath assured us that he will be the keeper of his church. By the way, the antithesis is to be noted between the voice of God and the turbulent commotions of kingdoms.

8 *The Lord of hosts, &c.*] We are taught by this verse in what manner we may apply to our own use the things which the scripture utters everywhere concerning the immeasurable power of God, if we believe ourselves to be of that number whom God hath embraced with his fatherly love, and whom he will cherish. For he commends again the adoption, by which Israel was set apart from the common lot of all nations, otherwise the record of God's almighty power would but strike us with fear. Hence comes our boldness to glory; namely, that he had chosen us for his peculiar people, to shew forth his might in preserving us. In which respect, after that the prophet has magnified his power by calling him *the God of hosts*, immediately he adds the other title, by which he made his covenant in old time with Abraham, that his posterity, to whom the inheritance of the promised grace belongs, should not doubt but that God favoured them also. For that our faith may rest on a firm foundation, these two things must be considered in God together, namely, his immeasurable power, with which he is armed to subdue the whole world; and also his fatherly love, which has displayed his word. Now, when these two

are joined together, nothing can hinder faith vaunting itself against all enemies. For it is not to be doubted whether God will succour us or no, because he hath promised he will do it: and as for power, he hath sufficient to perform it, because he is the God of hosts. Hence we gather that those persons err deplorably, in the interpretation of scripture, who leave suspended in air all that is spoken concerning God's might, and believe not that, because they are of his flock, and partakers of his adoption, he will be as a father to them.

9 *Come, consider, &c.*] He seems to proceed still with the history of the deliverance, whereby God had avouched himself to be the most efficient and faithful defender of his church, that the faithful should fetch thence both armour and strength to overcome temptations, whatsoever should spring up hereafter. For the assurances of God's favour, which he hath displayed in very deed by saving us, must be continually before our eyes, that they may establish the faithfulness of his promises in our hearts. Nevertheless in this exhortation he tacitly rebukes the dulness of those that make not so great account of God's power as they ought to do; or rather he reproves the whole world for unthankfulness, because scarce one of a hundred acknowledges that God is able to defend him, and thus they are all purblind in God's works, or rather they wilfully shut their eyes at that which would further them most in the building up of their faith. We see how many ascribe that to fortune, which it would become them to impute to God's providence. Others imagine themselves to have gotten by their own cunning efforts all that God had bestowed upon them, or ascribe whatsoever proceeds from him alone to second causes, while others are utterly lost to all sense. Wherefore not without cause does he summon them all, and exhort them to the consideration of God's works, as if he should say, the reason why men repose not the hope of their welfare in God, is that they are either slow or malignant in considering his works. And forasmuch as he directs his address to all men indifferently, we gather that even the godly also are drowsy and benumbed till they are awakened. Moreover, he extols highly God's power in preserving his chosen people, which is wont to be either despised or not weighed according to its desert, when it works after the ordinary manner. He therefore sets before them wildernesses and other stupendous things that may move their senses more effectually. That which follows next, *that he maketh battles to cease*, if any one like to understand it of God's special help, must be referred to this end, that the

faithful must look for that in time to come which they have had trial of by experience already. And, it must be admitted, the prophet seems by one deed to shew indefinitely how mightily God is wont to defend his church, although it has happened more than once that God, discouraging the enemies' hearts, breaking their bows, and burning their chariots, hath pacified all commotions through Judah, and driven away wars. And it is reasonable to suppose that the prophet took occasion therefrom to put the Jews in mind how often God had disappointed the greatest attempts of their enemies. One thing is quite clear, that God is adorned with these titles, that we should hope for peace at his hand, even when all the world is in uproar.

11 *Be still, and know ye, &c.*] He seems now to turn his discourse peculiarly to the enemies of God's people, that indulge their lust of mischief with greater boldness because when they put the saints to trouble they think not that in so doing they make war against God. Inasmuch then as, thinking that they are dealing only with men, they rush on presumptuously without fear or shame, the prophet here restrains their headiness, and that his address may have the more force, he brings in God himself speaking. And first he bids them be still, that they may know him to be God. For we see when men run ahead rashly, there is no room for moderation, and therefore the prophet (not without cause) requires the enemies of the church to be still, that when their heat is allayed they may perceive that they are fighting against God. We had an almost similar sentence in the fourth Psalm and the fifth verse: *Stand in awe and sin not: bethink yourselves in your hearts, and be still.* The effect is, that the world, subduing their turbulent affections, should yield to the God of Israel the glory he deserves; and if they proceed to play the madmen, he warns them that his power is not inclosed within the bounds of Judah, and that it will be no hard matter for him to stretch out his arm afar to the Gentiles, to glorify himself everywhere. Afterwards is repeated that which was spoken before, that God is powerful enough, and to boot, both in weapons and strength, to defend the church which he hath adopted.

END OF VOL. I.

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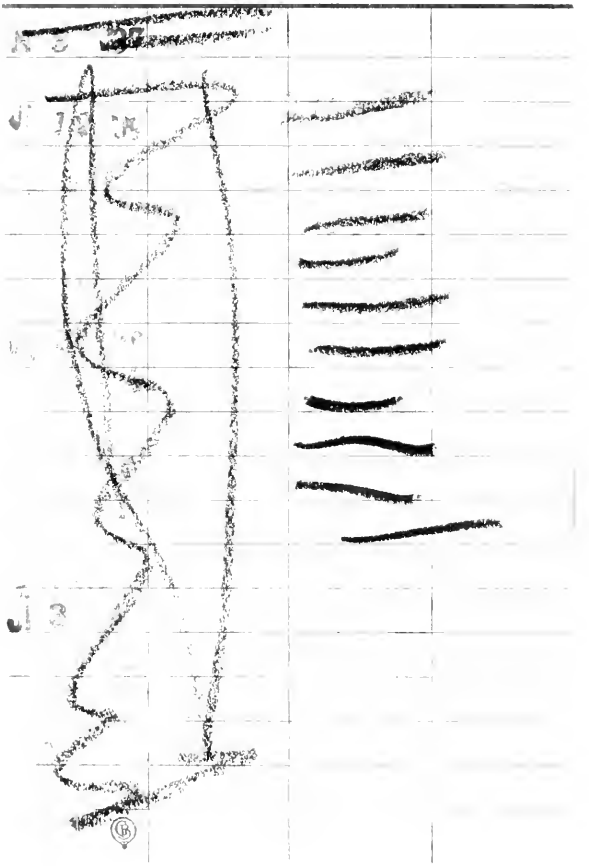
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